Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

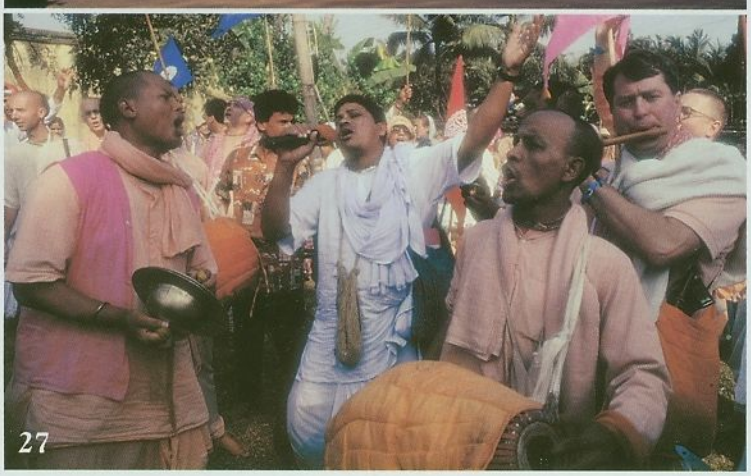
The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Jan /Feb 2000 • $4.00 / £4.50

Why We Must Know Who God Is

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 34, No. 1 • January/February 2000



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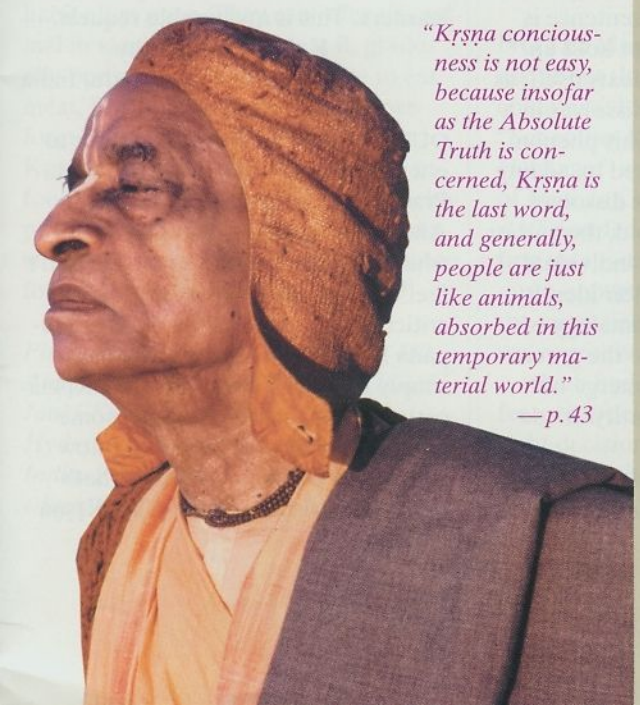
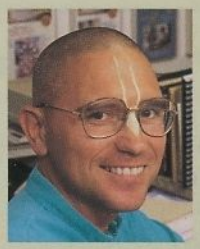
COVER Most people have only a vague idea of God, but from the Vedic literature we learn that God is Lord Kṛṣṇa, shown here with His eternal consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. To read about some of the evidence establishing Lord Kṛṣṇa's position, please see the article beginning on page 7. (Painting by Gopīnātha Dāsa.)



"Kṛṣṇa conciousness is not easy, because insofar as the Absolute Truth is concerned, Kṛṣṇa is the last word, and generally, people are just like animals, absorbed in this temporary material world."
—p. 43

WELCOME



When His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda incorporated the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1966, a friend suggested he call it The International Society for *God* Consciousness rather than The International Society for *Kṛṣṇa* Consciousness. But Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted people to know that when he spoke of God, he meant a specific person: Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In his lecture in this issue, Śrīla Prabhupāda presents some arguments for accepting Kṛṣṇa as God. When speaking with people who balked at the proposal that Kṛṣṇa is God, Prabhupāda would often challenge them to suggest someone else—a suggestion that usually left them speechless. Prabhupāda was sure that Kṛṣṇa is God, and he dedicated his life to convincing others of that truth, with much success.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has been worshiped as God for thousands of years. In this issue we visit the Kṛṣṇa temple in Dvārakā, where Lord Kṛṣṇa spent more than one hundred years during His presence on earth five thousand years ago.

Of course, you'll find Kṛṣṇa mentioned throughout the magazine because, as our name implies, *Back to Godhead* is meant for redirecting our lives toward God: Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Nāgarāja Dāsa
Editor

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and source of all material and spiritual worlds

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa's most recent incarnation, taught Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER
(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

EDITOR Nāgarāja Dāsa • **ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Drutakarmā Dāsa, Jagajīvana Dāsa, Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa, Mukunda Goswami, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī • **EDITORIAL ADVISOR** Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami • **DESIGN/LAYOUT** Yamarāja Dāsa • **PROOFREADERS** Guru Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, Ijya Dāsa, Keśihanta Dāsa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛpā Dāsa • **EDITORIAL ASSISTANT** Kamalā Devī Dāsī • **ARCHIVES** Raṇajit Dāsa • **SUBSCRIBER SERVICES** Arcī Devī Dāsī, Dulāla Candra Dāsa, Lokasākṣinī Devī Dāsī • **CIRCULATION DIRECTOR** Mallikā Devī Dāsī • **ACCOUNTS** Puṇya Kīrti Dāsa

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Letters

Paying for Māyāpur

I greatly enjoyed reading the last BTG about Māyāpur. Just one question: How much is that big temple going to cost, and how will it be paid for?

Raghupati Prāṇa Dāsa
Alachua, Florida

OUR REPLY: Based on current designs, which are nearing completion, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium will cost up to US$100 million to build. Funds will come from thousands of private donors in India and the West. Project organizers have not yet begun raising funds for the temple and will start only when the design is "frozen."

Śrīla Prabhupāda provided in his will that some royalties from the sales of his books through the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) could be used to help build this temple. So far the BBT has borne the costs of design and engineering.

Hazy Analogy

As a lover of analogies, I am moved to respond to the article by Krishan B. Lal on page twelve of the Sep./Oct. issue. In explaining that the soul can never merge into God, he writes, "A drop of water does not disintegrate or dissolve when it merges with the ocean." Unless this sentence is explained, it just does not hold up. As it is, the sentence defeats itself, as a drop of water always dissolves in a greater body of water. This phenomenon can be demonstrated by adding dye to the drop before it dissolves. To make the analogy hold, the author could have said that the individual water molecules keep their identity.

Personally, I like the analogy of the green bird flying into the green tree. The bird seems to merge but keeps his individual identity. It's so simple.

Ananta Śakti Dāsa
Borehamwood, England

Favorite Issue

Many thanks for the most ecstatic Sept./Oct. issue of the BTG. I especially relished the article by Vṛndāvanī Devī Dāsī on the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana. I was conquered by Viśākhā's article "Mine," and by Kālakaṇṭha's on getting prepared. Dhyāna-kuṇḍa's articles are always among my favorites, and I like Satyarāja Prabhu's scholarly approach. The article by Praghoṣa Dāsa was very sweet, and the one by Arcana-siddhī very impressive. I am also especially happy that Ūrmilā is still part of the team. Her input is always very profound and well documented. Śrīla Prabhupāda's articles are as usual very sharp and purifying, just like chutney—very hot, but so sweet that we can't stop eating.

My humble obeisances to our new editor and his staunch team; they are doing an outstanding service for Śrīla Prabhupāda. This issue of BTG was definitely my favorite one.

Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana Devī Dāsī
France (via the Internet)

Pinching Words

In your article on pages eight and nine of the July/August issue, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's word *mūḍha* in *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.11 is translated as "rascals," "fools," etc. Please don't use words that pinch new learners. This is my humble request.

K. P. Satyamoorthy
Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

OUR REPLY: The article you refer to is a transcription of a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda given many years ago. Although we edit his lectures somewhat for grammar, and so on, we don't feel we have the right to delete his criticisms of nondevotees. As Prabhupāda himself would point out, he is simply repeating Kṛṣṇa's words. Kṛṣṇa certainly has the right to label someone a fool, and people should know who Kṛṣṇa considers foolish. That's part of the wisdom of the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa

makes distinctions.

As disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda we don't feel it is proper for us to interfere with his preaching style. If he felt it was important to repeat Kṛṣṇa's words in pointing out who is foolish, it's not our position to challenge him.

We ourselves might use a gentler approach when preaching, and Prabhupāda did that also, but if Prabhupāda felt that strong words were sometimes needed, we have to agree with that assessment. Besides, we might not be able to predict the effect of strong words. Someone might read them and think, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa says I'm a fool. So I should stop being a fool and surrender to Him."

Śrīla Prabhupāda often spoke strongly, and he inspired thousands—maybe millions—of people to become devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

Why Animal Sacrifice?

If the Lord dislikes killing, why are animal sacrifices to God found in the Bible?

Chung Fai Wu
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: Although animal sacrifice to God is mentioned in the Bible, it is ultimately forbidden there, as it is in the Vedic scriptures. Sometimes the scriptures recommend animal sacrifice for meat-eaters who can't give up their habit all at once. They can offer the animal in sacrifice and then eat it, gradually becoming free of the desire to eat meat. Fortunately, today we can perform the sacrifice of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and eating delicious vegetarian food offered to Kṛṣṇa. That will quickly purify us and free us from the base desire to eat meat. There's no good reason for anyone to kill animals today.

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CORRECTIONS: In *Vyāsadeva: The Literary Incarnation of God* (Sept./Oct. 1999), Vyāsadeva is identified as "a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra,* an eternally liberated *jīva* (a soul like you or I, not the Supreme Lord) particularly empowered with an opulence of God." One of our readers, Janajanmādi Dāsa, has written with additional information:

"In *Tattva-sandarbha* (16.2) Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.4.2–5 to explain that in every *divya-yuga* (cycle of the four cosmic ages) a different *jīva* soul usually is empowered as a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* to take the position of Vyāsa, the divider of the *Vedas,* but in this present *divya-yuga* Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself appeared as Vyāsa. Therefore the present Vyāsa is Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, for He is Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself and not an ordinary *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* Vyāsa."

On the inside back cover of the Nov./Dec. issue, the verse attributed to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is actually a verse written by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura based on a section of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* known as the Dahara-vidya.

In "A Western Pilgrim in Māyāpura" (Nov./Dec.), the house of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, where Lord Caitanya began the *saṅkīrtana* movement, is incorrectly identified as the house of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya.

NOTE: Many readers have written to ask about the recent absence of the columns ("Lessons From the Road," "Schooling Kṛṣṇa's Children,""India's Heritage," and so on) from the pages of *Back to Godhead.* Our editorial staff decided to drop the columns to free up space and thereby allow for more opportunities to add variety to the magazine. Judging from the praise we've received for the Sep. /Oct. issue —which had no columns but eleven feature articles—we feel we made the right decision. We've encouraged the authors of the columns to keep writing for BTG, and we hope they will.

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on in the modern world a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five milleniums ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Painting by Muralidhara Dasa

WHY WE MUST KNOW WHO GOD IS

Evidence about the identity of God is available, but are we willing to see it?

A lecture in Vṛndāvana, India, on August 16, 1974

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

At left: Five thousand years ago, King Yudhiṣṭhira, the emperor of the world, knew Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Lord and therefore offered Him the first worship at the great Rājasūya sacrifice.

yad atra kriyate karma
bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam
jñānaṁ yat tad adhīnaṁ hi
bhakti-yoga-samanvitam

"Whatever work is done here in this life for the satisfaction of the mission of the Lord is called bhakti-yoga, or transcendental loving service to the Lord, and what is called knowledge becomes a concomitant factor."

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.35

EARLIER IN *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we find a similar passage:

ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā
varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ
svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya
saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam

"O best among the twice-born [*brāhmaṇas*], it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions [*varṇa*] and orders of life [*āśrama*] is to please the Personality of Godhead."

Bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam and *hari-toṣaṇam* are the same thing. *Bhagavat* and Hari both refer to God; *paritoṣaṇam* and *toṣaṇam* both mean "satisfy." First, we must know God; then we may try to satisfy Him.

Unfortunately, people do not know God. So what is the question of satisfying Him? Nowadays people have only a vague idea of God, practically no idea. What is God? People say, "God is good." Or sometimes people say, "God is great." But how great He is, how good He is, nobody knows. Then what is the question of satisfying Him?

If I do not know someone, and somebody says, "Go and satisfy so-and-so," what will I do? If I do not know him, or where he lives or what he does, then how can I satisfy him?

So *hari-toṣaṇam,* or *bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam,* is possible when we actually know God. As far as we Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are concerned, we know God. Therefore the service of satisfying God is possible for us. We know God. Not that we have some vague idea. We know who God is, where He lives, what He does, His

We know who God is, where He lives, what He does, His name, His father's name—everything.

• • •

name, His father's name—everything. We are competent to satisfy God because we know exactly who God is. He is Kṛṣṇa. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam:* "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord."

How do we know that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? By history, by authority, and by His actions. We know from the historical point of view. Kṛṣṇa is discussed in the *Mahābhārata,* "The History of Greater India." In the *Yajur Veda* also we find the name of Kṛṣṇa and His father, Vasudeva. Besides that, five thousand years ago Kṛṣṇa appeared as He is and acted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So what is the difficulty in understanding Kṛṣṇa?

Kṛṣṇa is the richest person, the most beautiful, the wisest. He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā.* Who else—in the whole world, the whole universe—has given such wise instruction? No one. God means the wisest, the richest, the strongest, the most beautiful. Kṛṣṇa was so beautiful that 16,108 very, very beautiful women married Him. And many millions of unmarried girls were attracted by Kṛṣṇa, the most beautiful.

One of Kṛṣṇa's names is Śyāmasundara. *Śyāma* means "blackish," and *sundara* means "very beautiful." He's so attractive and beautiful that He surpasses in beauty millions and millions of Cupids. One of His names is Madana-mohana. Madana is Cupid. Cupid enchants everyone, but Cupid is enchanted by Kṛṣṇa. Therefore God's name is Madana-mohana.

Accepting the Evidence

We know God. The scriptures say, the saintly authorities say, and the histories say that Kṛṣṇa is God, *bhagavān.* What more proof do you want? Is there anyone to challenge Kṛṣṇa?

But still you are searching after God. This is foolishness, or owls' philosophy. The owl will not open his eyes to see the sun.

"Just open your eyes, and you will see—here is the sun."

"No, there is no sun."

This is owls' philosophy. Close the eyes and meditate.

We do not follow this owls' philosophy. We follow real philosophy. What is real philosophy? *Śruti-pramāṇam:* evidence from the *Vedas.* There are many types of evidence, but for followers of the Vedic principle, the best evidence is *śruti-pramāṇam.* If something is mentioned in the *Vedas, Upaniṣads,* or other Vedic books, then it is *śruti-pramāṇam.* There are four *Vedas,* 108 *Upaniṣads,* eighteen *Purāṇas,* the *Mahābhārata.* All these are part of the Vedic literature. We find real philosophy in the *Purāṇas,* the histories, the *Vedas,* and in the words of the authorities.

Brahmā is the best authority because he is the first living being created within the universe. Brahmā is *ādi-kavi,* the first learned scholar. And what does Brahmā say? What is his knowledge? He says, *govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi.* Brahmā says that Govinda, or Kṛṣṇa, is the original person and the source of Brahmā himself.

In the *Brahma-saṁhitā,* Brahmā describes Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's abode. Brahmā's words are our authority. They are *śruti,* Vedic evidence. Brahmā describes how Kṛṣṇa is very fond of tending cows—*surabhīr abhipālayantam.* He describes Kṛṣṇa's abode: *cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu.* In Kṛṣṇa's abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, the houses are made of *cintāmaṇi,* touchstone. Touchstone is a stone that turns iron to gold. Touchstone is used as bricks in Kṛṣṇa's abode.

Things in Kṛṣṇa's abode are unlike here. Here everything is material. But there everything is spiritual.

The material world also depends on spirit. In *Bhagavad-gītā,* Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme spirit, says, "I am the seed of all existence." There is no question of anything material being manifest without the spiritual touch. This body—your body, my body—is material. Everyone knows it is made of earth, water, fire, air, and so on. But how did it become manifested? There is a spiritual touch: The spirit soul is there.

Dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā tathā: the external body is changing, from childhood to youth to old age, on account of the spiritual touch. "Spiritual touch" means Kṛṣṇa. He is the spiritual seed-giving father, the origin of everything. Just as the origin of a big tree is the root, so Kṛṣṇa is the original person, the cause of all causes—*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam.* A tree has a trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits, but their cause is the root or the seed.

In today's verse it is said, *bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam.* The root must be satisfied. If you want to maintain a tree, then the root, or the original cause of the tree, should be watered. Then everything is satisfied. Here in the material world people are trying to be happy, but they do not know how to become happy. They are put into the ocean of nescience and may be very expert swimmers, but swimming will not save them. They must know how to be saved.

Two Kinds of Activity

Here it is said, *yad atra kriyate karma.* Everyone is doing something. There are two kinds of activity: *vaidikī* and *laukikī. Vaidikī* means "according to the Vedic rituals": performance of big sacrifices, and so on. *Laukikī* refers to other activities: labor in factories and mills, scientific research, and so on. Here it does not say that you can be happy only by big ritualistic ceremonies. You can be happy even by activities for maintaining the body. *Yad atra* refers to the material world, and *kriyate* refers to anything you are doing. *Yad atra kriyate karma bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam:* it doesn't matter that you do not understand Vedic rituals and that you want to develop the economic

position of your country by industrial enterprises. That is also good. How? *Bhagavat-paritoṣaṇam:* if it is conducted for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa.

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement does not tell you to stop anything. No. Whatever you like, you can do, but try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by your work. That is our proposal.

The divisions of work must be there; otherwise, society cannot run very nicely. If everyone is uninterested in anything material, the world will not go on. There must be statesmen, politicians, generals, and there must be the productive class and the workers. Everything is required.

So we do not say, "Stop this" or "Stop that." No. These divisions are scientifically made in the Vedic conception of life: four *āśramas* [spiritual divisions] for spiritual advancement and four *varṇas* [occupational divisions] for material advancement. We want all of them because our life is a combination of spirit and matter.

We try to make the best use of a bad bargain. Suppose you have a car, not a very good car. It's not an American car, but an Ambassador from India [laughter]. Three times it breaks down, but you still have to use it—bad bargain. Similarly, somehow or other we have the material body. We cannot neglect it. We don't say, "Neglect it. Don't care for the body."

Using the Body

That is the instruction of the six Gosvāmīs, the prominent disciples of Lord Caitanya: Don't be attached to bodily demands—eating, sleeping, sex, and defending. We could say, "I am not this body, so I don't care for eating, sleeping, and so on." No. That kind of renunciation is not recommended by our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We say: Do not be attached to the demands of the body, but use the body for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Eating is required; otherwise, the body cannot be maintained. But do not eat too much, and do not eat according to the taste of the tongue—meat, fish, and eggs. You are a human being. For you Kṛṣṇa has given so many varieties of food: fruits, vegetables, rice, *dāl,* milk, ghee. Why should you eat meat? Don't eat like the cats and dogs but eat like a human being.

Similarly, you require some rest, but don't sleep twenty-six hours. Six to eight hours is sufficient for any healthy man. Even doctors say that if anyone sleeps more than eight hours he is diseased. He must be weak. A healthy man sleeps six hours at a stretch. That is sufficient.

"Gosvāmī" means you must be the master of the senses, or self-controlled. The six Gosvāmīs conquered over eating, sleeping, and sense enjoyment. Our process is to follow the six Gosvāmīs. We should keep in view what they did. They passed their time talking about Kṛṣṇa.

The only aim of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to satisfy Lord Kṛṣṇa. We should use our intelligence and accept a process by which our spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes on very nicely. The only process should be to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, *hari-toṣaṇam.* That is the recommended Vedic process: *saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam. Saṁsiddhi* means "perfection." If we want the perfection of our activities, then we should try to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead by our activities.

The Test for Satisfying Kṛṣṇa

You may say, "I do not see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face. How will I be able to know whether I am satisfying Him or dissatisfying Him?"

That you can know through your spiritual master. It is not very difficult. If your spiritual master is satisfied, then you should know that Kṛṣṇa is satisfied. You cannot satisfy Kṛṣṇa by dissatisfying your spiritual master. That is not possible. You must satisfy him. Do not use the excuse that you do not know God or do not see Him and thus you cannot know whether you have satisfied Him or dissatisfied Him.

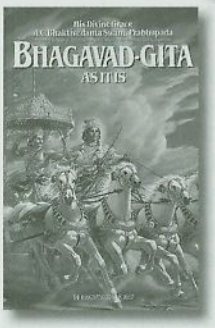
We receive knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, from Arjuna, from Brahmā, from Nārada. It comes down to your spiritual master, and you receive the knowledge in that way, step by step. That is called *paramparā,* disciplic succession. Similarly, you satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead step by step. That is the process. Just as you go down stairs step by step, you also go up step by step.

Our aim is *bhagavat-toṣaṇam* or *hari-toṣaṇam.* And we receive knowledge from Bhagavān, God, in the *paramparā* system. The *paramparā* system must be maintained. If you act within the *paramparā* system and satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then whatever you do is perfect. It doesn't matter what you do. The test is whether Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, whether your spiritual master is satisfied. Then you are perfect.

Thank you very much.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

Q & A on the GĪTĀ



Compiled by Krishan B. Lal

Painting by Philip Malpass

Kṛṣṇa acts as Arjuna's chariot driver on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

PART 4

The Gītā, *or* Bhagavad-gītā *("The Song of God"), was spoken five thousand years ago by Lord Kṛṣṇa to the prince Arjuna. It contains the essence of Vedic knowledge.*

The compiler has applied a question/answer format to the Introduction to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, *by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.*

What is liberation?

Mukti, or liberation, means freedom from material consciousness. The *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken to liberate one from the bodily conception of life, and Arjuna put himself in that position to receive this information from the Lord.

One must become free from the bodily conception of life; that is the preliminary activity for the transcendentalist. One who wants to become free, who wants to become liberated, must first of all learn that he is not the material body.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also defines liberation. *Muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ:* "*Mukti* means liberation from the contaminated consciousness of this material world and situation in pure consciousness." All the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* are intended to awaken this pure consciousness, and therefore we find at the last stage of the *Gītā's* instructions that Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna whether he is now in purified consciousness. Purified consciousness means acting in accordance with the instructions of the Lord.

What is pure activity?

The *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches that we have to purify our materially contaminated consciousness. In pure consciousness, our actions will be dovetailed to the will of the supreme controller, and that will make us happy. It is not that we have to cease all activities. Rather, our activities are to be purified, and purified activities are called bhakti, or devotional service.

Activities in bhakti appear like ordinary activities, but they are not contaminated. An ignorant person may see that a devotee is acting or working like an ordinary man, but such a person does not know that the activities of the devotee or of the Lord are not contaminated by matter or impure consciousness. The activities of the Lord and His devotees are transcendental to the modes of nature.

We should know, however, that at this point our consciousness is contaminated. We are temporarily engaged in different activities, but when we give up these temporary activities and take up the activities prescribed by the Supreme Lord, that is pure life.

What is the impersonal Brahman?

The impersonal Brahman is the shining rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is also known as the *brahmajyoti.* The *Gītā* explains that the impersonal Brahman is subordinate to the Supreme Person (*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*).

What is Paramātmā?

Paramātmā is the form of the Lord appearing in the heart of every living entity and within each atom. Paramātmā is also called the Supersoul.

Is realization of Paramātmā or impersonal Brahman complete realization?

Realization of the impersonal Brahman is incomplete realization of the absolute whole, and so also is the conception of Paramātmā. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Puruṣottama, is above both impersonal Brahman and realization of Paramātmā.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha,* "one whose form is composed of eternity, knowledge, and bliss." The *Brahma-saṁhitā* begins in this way: "Govinda, Kṛṣṇa, is the cause of all causes. He is the primal cause, and He is the very form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss."

Impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of Kṛṣṇa's *sat* (eternity) feature. Paramātmā realization is the realization of His *sat-cit* (eternity and knowledge) features. But realization of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is realization of all the transcendental features: *sat, cit,* and *ānanda* (eternity, knowledge, and bliss) in complete *vigraha* (form).

Where is the most desirable destination?

If we properly use the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā,* then our whole life will become purified and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination beyond the material sky. That destination is called the eternal, spiritual sky.

In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles, and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit, or anything. But beyond this temporary world is another world of which we have information. That world consists of another nature, which is *sanātana,* eternal.

In the eleventh chapter both the *jīva* and the Lord are described as *sanātana.* We have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and because we are all qualitatively one—the eternal sky, the eternal Supreme Personality, and the eternal living entities —the whole purpose of *Bhagavad-gītā* is to revive our *sanātana-dharma,* the eternal occupation of the living entity. As long as we do not give up the propensity of lording it over material nature, there is no possibility of returning to the kingdom of the Supreme, the eternal abode.

Why does the Supreme Lord descend?

The Lord is very kind to the living entities because they are His sons. Lord Kṛṣṇa declares in *Bhagavad-gītā, sarva-yoniṣu . . . ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā:* "I am the father of all." There are many types of living entities according to their various karmas, but

It is not possible to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.

• • •

here the Lord claims that He is the father of all of them. Therefore the Lord descends to reclaim all these fallen, conditioned souls, to call them back to the eternal sky so that the eternal living entities may regain their eternal positions in eternal association with the Lord. The Lord comes Himself in different incarnations, or He sends His confidential servants as His sons or associates to reclaim the conditioned souls.

What is the meaning of *svarūpa*?

Every living being, out of the many, many billions and trillions of living beings, has a particular relationship with the Lord eternally. That is called *svarūpa,* the constitutional position of the living entity. By the process of devotional service, one can revive that *svarūpa,* and that stage is called *svarūpa-siddhi*—perfection of one's constitutional position.

What is the living entity's *svarūpa*?

When Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu about the *svarūpa* of every living being, the Lord replied that the *svarūpa,* or constitutional position, of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya's, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in various capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. A serves B master, B serves C master, and C serves D master, and so on. One friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, the wife serves the husband, the husband serves the wife.

No living being is exempt from service. The politician presents his manifesto for the public to convince them of his capacity for service. The voters therefore give the politician their valuable votes, thinking that he will render valuable service to society. The shopkeeper serves the customer, and the artisan serves the capitalist. The capitalist serves the family, and the family serves the state.

We can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and rendering service is the eternal religion of the living being. The Hindu, Muslim, or Christian in all circumstances is servant of someone.

Is there a connection between service and happiness?

We are related to the Supreme Lord in service. He is the supreme enjoyer, and we living entities are His servitors. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we take part in that eternal enjoyment with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we become happy. We cannot become happy otherwise. It is not possible to be happy independently, just as no one part of the body can be happy without cooperating with the stomach. It is not possible for the living entity to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.

What is the nature of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's abode?

Among all the planets in the spiritual sky there is one supreme planet, called Goloka Vṛndāvana, which is the original planet in the abode of the original Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The abode of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* fifteenth chapter, sixth verse:

na tad bhāsayate sūryo
na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramaṁ mama

"That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world." We have a material conception of the sky, and we think of it in relationship to the sun, moon, stars, and so on, but in this verse the Lord states that in the eternal sky there is no need for the sun, nor for the moon, electricity, or fire, because the spiritual sky is illuminated by the *brahmajyoti,* the rays emanating from the Supreme Lord.

In the effulgent rays of the spiritual sky there are innumerable planets floating. The *brahmajyoti* emanates from the supreme abode, Kṛṣṇaloka, and the spiritual planets float in those rays. The Lord says that one who can approach that spiritual sky is not required to descend again to the material sky.

Why does the Lord descend from His abode?

The Lord resides eternally in His abode, yet He can be approached from this world, and to this end the Lord comes here in His original form. When He manifests this form, there is no need for our imagining what He looks like. To discourage such imaginative speculation, He descends and exhibits Himself as He is. Unfortunately, the less intelligent deride Him because He comes as one of us and plays with us as a human being. But we should not consider the Lord one of us. By His omnipotence He presents Himself in His real form before us and displays His pastimes, which are replicas of those found in His abode.

Krishnan B. Lal, an ISKCON Life Member, is retired and lives in Huntigton Beach, California.

Glossary

Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukṣetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal or void.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally "mercy").

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Purī, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas*.

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Putting Kṛṣṇa To the Test

By presenting ideas from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, a Kṛṣṇa devotee wins high grades in the secular world of academics.

by Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa

AS HE WALKED INTO the office copy room, Dhīra Govinda Dāsa glanced at the local paper lying on the table. He grimaced a bit as he read the masthead: "Dixie County, Home of the World's Only Four-Headed Swamp Cabbage."

As an entry-level social worker in rural Florida, he wondered about his new job and his future. Just then, looking up from the newspaper, he noticed for the first time a colorful announcement on the office bulletin board: "Master of Social Work (M.SW.) Program at Florida State University now accepting applications." Walking over to the board, he carefully read the details.

"Should I even consider this?" he thought.

Dhīra Govinda (David Wolf) had graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1983. He then took some time off to travel in Europe. In Israel a few months later, to satisfy his growing interest in philosophy and spiritual life he undertook a deep study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in a Hare Kṛṣṇa ashram. In 1985 he accepted spiritual initiation and the name Dhīra Govinda Dāsa, "servant of the imperturbable Supreme Lord." Late in 1990, with the Persian Gulf war looming, he returned to the United States with his wife and two-month-old daughter.

He had been a good student in college, though not exceptional. Concerned about his future in Dixie County, he now (1993) decided to take the graduate-school application tests. When his scores came back unusually high, he was surprised and pleased, and was accepted into the program.

A Waste of Time?

Dhīra Govinda now faced a dilemma. The Vedic scriptures—the subject of his study and fascination for many years—emphasize the value of spiritual development. Declaring the rare human life meant for self-realization, great Vedic authorities lamented time wasted in "pastimes of mundane scholarship." College would mean secular teachings and, at best, tolerance of his spirituality. He contemplated the conflicts between his spiritual convictions and the prospect of more years in college.

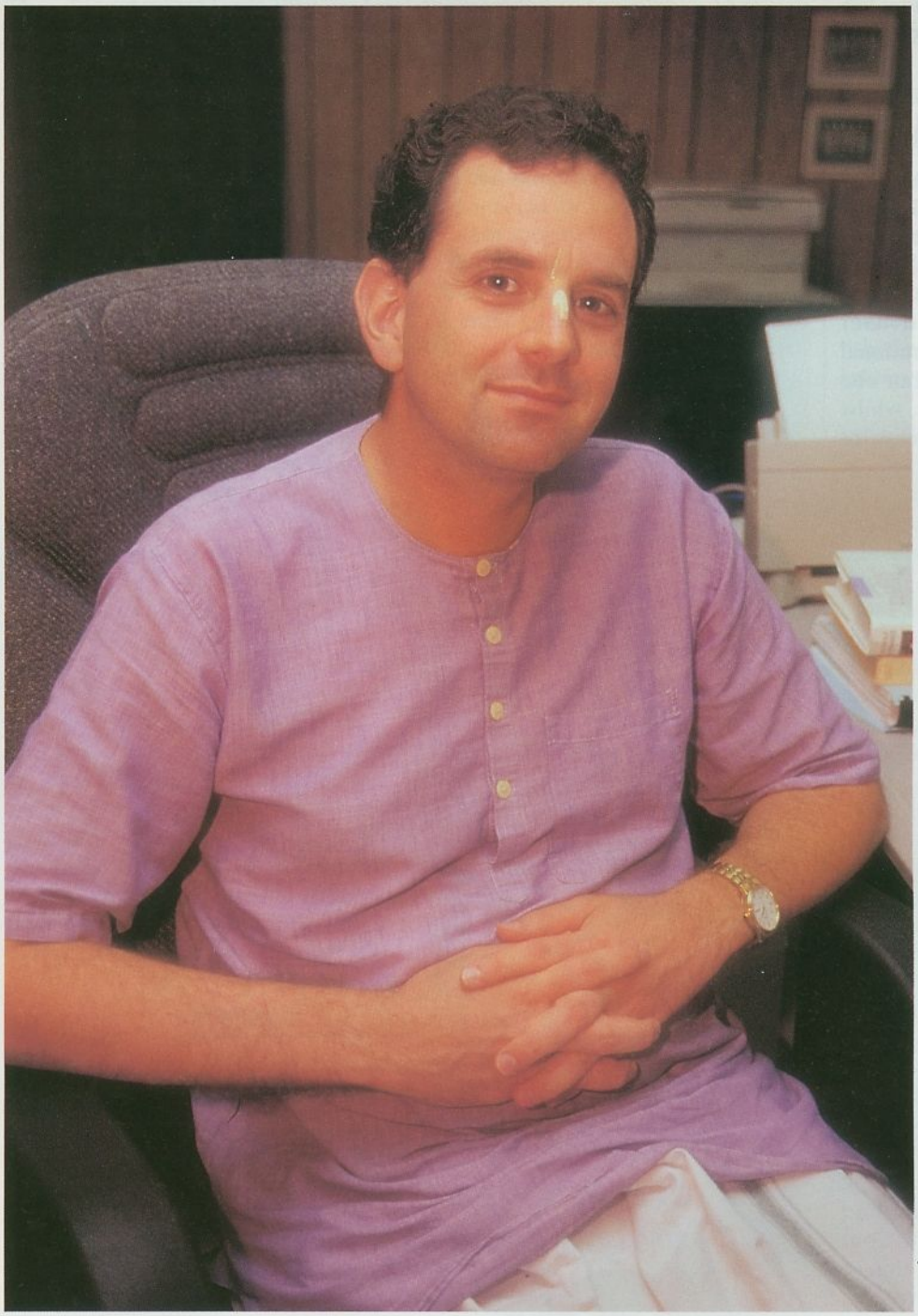
At last he decided to pursue a master's degree, but without compromising his Kṛṣṇa conscious principles. He would stick to his convictions and see how far he could progress in the classroom. Following Kṛṣṇa's instructions to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Dhīra Govinda would try to remember Kṛṣṇa while performing his academic duties and leave the results up to Kṛṣṇa.

School started ominously. In the introductory class, the professor declared, "Social work has its roots in religious and spiritual causes. We're not proud of these beginnings."

Realizing the ironclad secular bent in social work, Dhīra Govinda grew more determined to infuse his contribution to the profession with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Among his early courses was Human Biology. Aside from completing the assignments, Dhīra Govinda wrote to the professor and humbly but pointedly challenged sections of the textbook dealing with evolution. The professor responded with enthusiasm, pleased that a student was taking so much interest.

For an end-of-term project, Dhīra Govinda addressed his class on the role of the elderly in society. In a material-



Yamarāja Dāsa

Dhīra Govinda Dāsa, shown here in an office he uses for ISKCON-related services, is a social worker with the county of Alachua in Florida.

istic culture, he explained, old people are often seen as burdensome and spent. In a spiritually based society, however, the elders are revered for their wisdom and experience. When he introduced the Vedic social system and the position of *sannyāsa,* he noted with pleasure that the class found his presentation fresh and stimulating. People seemed interested in his Kṛṣṇa conscious perspectives.

In third semester, Dhīra Govinda prepared a paper for a class about communities and organizations. The paper critiqued the administrative structure of a social service organization.

As he arrived one evening for the large-enrollment class, the professor pulled him aside and asked, "Are you David Wolf?"

Dhīra Govinda said he was.

"The paper you prepared was the best I've ever read in twenty-five years as a professor."

He went on to praise the paper's incisive analytical content and urged Dhīra Govinda to pursue a Ph.D.

The respected professor had told the previous class, "We have a genius in our midst. You should get to know him."

Dhīra Govinda was surprised. The paper was nothing special. As usual, he had simply applied points from Prabhupāda's books to the particular topic. He was struck by how his Kṛṣṇa conscious training enabled him to see everything in a deeply philosophical way.

In another class, Dhīra Govinda applied the principle of *yukta-vairāgya* (using everything in Kṛṣṇa's service) to analyze and defuse a traditional debate within social work on qualitative versus quantitative research.

Once, during a break in a class on politics in society, Dhīra Govinda was cutting jokes with Kevin and Jim, two classmates. Quoting from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* he mentioned the four strategies used by leaders in dealing with rebellious subordinates: flattery, offering position, creating divisiveness, and punishment. The classmates went silent for a moment.

Then Jim said to Kevin, with some seriousness, "Did you take notes on that?"

In the midst of an ocean of speculative articles, books, and lectures on the subject, the two sensed receiving more

practical political knowledge in one or two sentences from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Vedic Source Material

Quoting from Vedic sources in papers and discussions, Dhīra Govinda found an endless supply of interesting and relevant ideas. In one class, he was asked to write comments on the following quote from William James: "Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. . . ."

Dhīra Govinda wrote, "For many years I've been interested in forms and levels of consciousness. Then at one point I thought, 'But who is it that's conscious?' It struck me that no scientist has ever mixed chemicals and created a conscious thing—not even an amoeba or a mosquito, what to speak of a human being. The body I had when I was a five-year-old boy is no longer there. Every atom is different. Yet there is something, some identity that is conscious of all my experiences of life. This identity must not be a function of my gross body, since my identity has remained constant, though the body and mind have changed."

The teacher commented, in red ink, "Wow! [As] always, you bring great depth of experience."

In other responses Dhīra Govinda expounded on the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* ("simultaneous oneness and difference"), quoted from *Brahma-saṁhitā* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* and pointed out the temporality of all material things. Citing the *Bhagavad-gītā,* he wrote on humility as an essential quality for an effective therapist.

Dhīra Govinda's professors were excited with his work. Recognizing his interest in presenting a spiritual and ethical message in the field of social work, one professor assigned him readings to help him present his spiritual message in a secular voice. Another professor asked him to review a course she was designing on epistemology in social science. Among other concepts straight from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, Dhīra Govinda suggested she include lessons on the defects of the material senses. She appreciated his suggestion and incorporated the ideas, especially those about the limitations of the empirical methods.

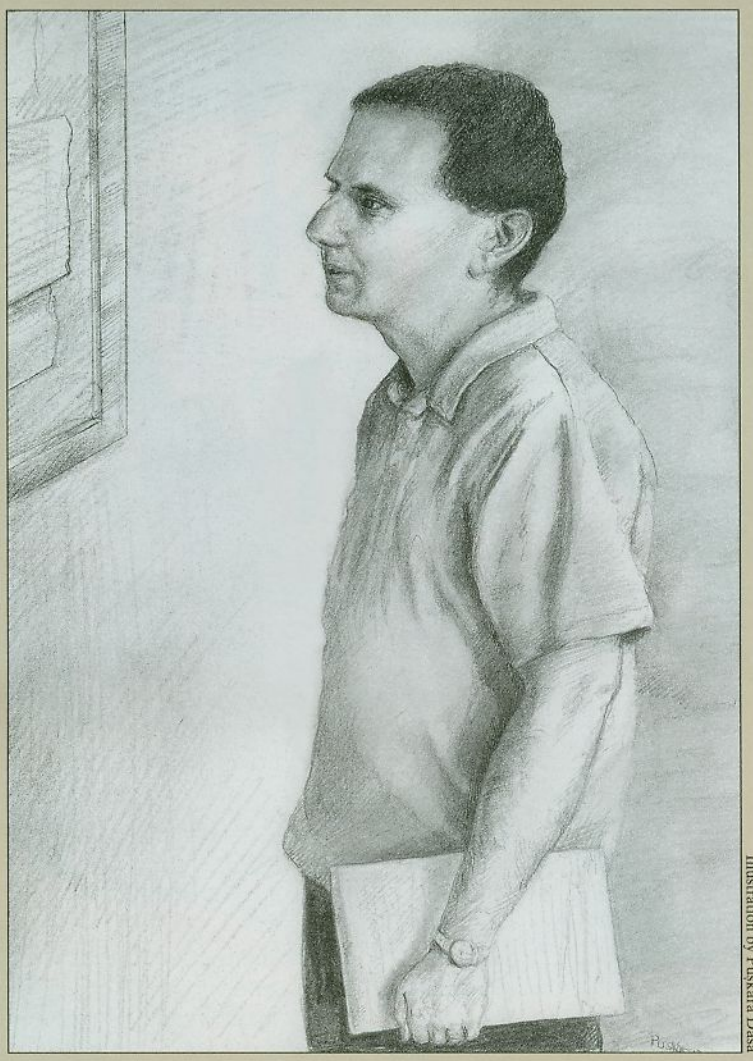


Illustration by Puṣkara Dāsa

A colorful announcement on the office bulletin board read: "Master of Social Work Program at Florida State University now accepting applications." "Should I even consider this?" Dhīra Govinda thought.

Dhīra Govinda began feeling more relaxed and accepted as a Hare Kṛṣṇa social worker. He took to carrying his *japa* bead bag with him and chanted as he walked about the campus during the day. To his surprise, a social services administrator noted this and told him that she and her husband often visited Kṛṣṇa temples.

In a course on the philosophy of social science, Dhīra Govinda was assigned to write extemporaneously on "the personal ontology and epistemology that underlies your approach to social work practice and research."

Diving right in, he wrote: "Underlying my practice approach is the assumption that a person is not the body.

Therefore, I consider it illusion for someone to think 'I am white,' 'I am black,' I am female,' 'I am male,' 'I am an Arab,' 'I am a Jew,' or any such bodily conception. These designations relate only to the temporary material covering of the person. . . . To illustrate by analogy, if a person were driving in a car produced in Italy, it would be incorrect to think 'I must be Italian.' The person could then get into a Toyota and think 'Now I'm Japanese.' The car has no intrinsic connection with the driver. Similarly, this material body has no intrinsic connection with the self. . . . Lack of understanding of our separateness from the body is the root cause of suffering. . . . My practice model involves helping a person realize the difference between the body and the self. For all types of social work and mental health scenarios, I consider this understanding to be essential. . . ."

Impressed, the professor commented that he especially liked the vehicle analogy. Then, at the end of his written comments, he asked frankly, "What are you doing here?" He couldn't understand what someone with such a philosophical outlook was doing in a postgraduate social work program. He assured Dhīra Govinda that he'd find his philosophical viewpoints unique in the field.

Dhīra Govinda relished being out of place, a proponent of absolute truth in a thundering herd of liberal speculators. In a final paper on issues of ethics, values, and morality in social work practice and research, Dhīra Govinda began by quoting a student orator at a Harvard graduation: "Among my classmates I believe that there is one idea, one sentiment, which we have all acquired at some point in our Harvard careers, and that is, in a word, confusion. . . . They tell us that it is heresy to suggest the superiority of some value, fantasy to believe in moral argument, slavery to submit to a judgment sounder than your own. The freedom of our day is the freedom to devote ourselves to any values we please, on the mere condition that we do not believe them to be true."

Building on this theme, Dhīra Govinda pounced upon the contradictions of the pervasive, relative doctrines of modern academics: "Philosophically, the paradox is irresoluble. 'Are you sure there's no absolute truth?' 'Yes.' 'Are you absolutely sure?' . . . Rigid attempts to cling to relativist doctrine lead to the confusion described by the Harvard graduate. This bewilderment and consequent feelings of emptiness and insecurity largely characterize modern society."

Presenting both a critique and a solution, Dhīra Govinda concluded: "If we enter concepts such as essence or soul into the discussion, material objectivism is no longer applicable. Social workers who profess an objectivist paradigm may be courteous, empathic, warm, and caring, but their paradigm provides no fundamental reason to develop such qualities."

Going on to explain the importance of understanding the soul in developing the compassionate relationships necessary for social work, Dhīra Govinda concluded with a direct presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: "When such a relationship is established within the heart, rules and regulations are no longer required. One

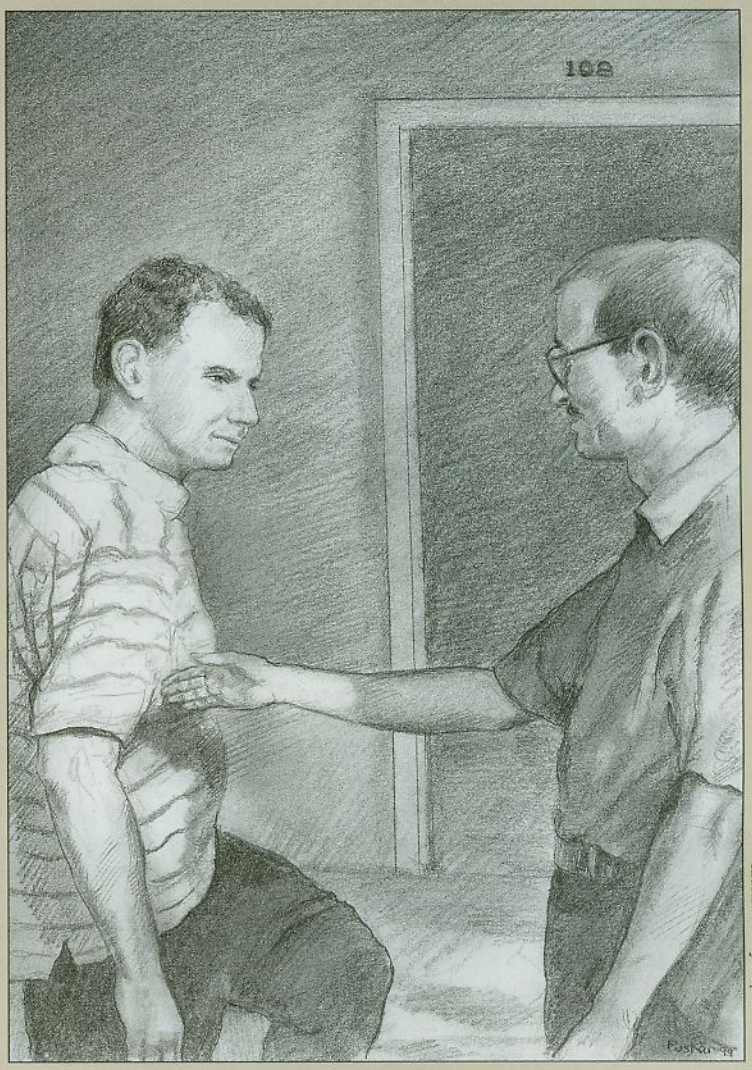


Illustration by Puṣkara Dāsa

The professor pulled Dhīra Govinda aside and said, "The paper you prepared was the best I've ever read in twenty-five years as a professor."

The Mahā-Mantra Research Project

by Dhīra Govinda Dāsa

ALTHOUGH I HAD done some preliminary theoretical work on researching the effects of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, I wasn't sure I wanted to pursue the research for my doctoral dissertation. I thought it would be too difficult to gather subjects and perform the study. I considered doing something easier for my dissertation, and then, after obtaining my Ph.D., I'd research Kṛṣṇa conscious topics. But my academic advisor, Dr. Neil Abell, encouraged me—challenged me—to research the mahā-mantra. He is a yoga teacher, and throughout my Ph.D. studies he guided my efforts to incorporate spirituality into my scholarly pursuits.

A first step in planning research is to review the literature on the topic. I found that although hundreds of studies had been done on spirituality and spiritual practices, including yoga techniques such as chanting mantras, there had been no research on the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, even though it is the mantra most recommended in the *Vedas* for spiritual realization in this age:

> *harer nāma harer nāma*
> *harer nāmaiva kevalam*
> *kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva*
> *nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is chanting of the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way." (*Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa*)

I felt encouraged to break ground in researching the effects of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. During the spring of 1998, I conducted a pilot study on the effects of the mahā-mantra on stress, depression, the three modes of nature (goodness, passion, and ignorance), and some other mental-health indicators, such as verbal aggressiveness and life satisfaction. The study involved five participants, and the results were encouraging; they were largely consistent with Vedic theory. But the study had shortcomings. One was the small number of subjects. Another was the lack of a control group. So the design of the research was insufficient to conclude scientifically that the changes in the subjects were due to chanting. The weather, the passage of time, or any of innumerable factors unrelated to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa could have caused the changes.

Three Test Groups

Still, the results of the pilot study justified a more rigorous investigation. So I formed an experiment involving three groups: a mahā-mantra group, an alternate mantra group, and a control group. The control group merely completed the packet of questionnaires and did not chant.

Though including a control group increased the validity of the research design, it still left open the explanation that any mantra, or any combination of sounds, would produce the same effect as the mahā-mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda often emphasized that the vibration of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra is not a material sound. So the experiment had to compare the mahā-mantra with another combination of sounds. I contrived a combination of sixteen Sanskrit syllables to serve as an alternate mantra. The syllables were arranged in the same pattern as the mahā-mantra, to preclude the explanation that the effects of the mahā-mantra were merely due to such things as regularity of breathing or the symmetry of the syllables.

Participants in both chanting groups chanted three rounds each day for 28 days. (One "round" is 108 mantras counted on beads.) All groups completed the surveys three times: on the first day of the experiment (pre-test), after the last day of chanting (post-test), and 28 days after the final chanting day (follow-up). The survey packet included the Vedic Personality Inventory (to measure the three modes of nature) and standardized measures for stress and depression. Two research assistants and I kept in touch with all subjects to ensure they adhered to the guidelines of the experiment.

The subjects volunteered in response to newspaper ads. Though the three groups started with an equal number of subjects, 24 from the mahā-mantra group completed the study, as did 19 from the alternate mantra group, and 19 from the control group. (The greater number in the mahā-mantra group is some indication that those who chanted the mahā-mantra derived greater benefit from the practice than those who chanted the alternate mantra.)

For the period from pre-test to post-test, statistical analyses revealed—for the mahā-mantra group compared with the other groups—a significant decrease in stress, depression, and the mode of ignorance, and a significant increase in the mode of goodness. These results held even after considering the variables of age and gender. The analyses of the period from pre-test to follow-up for the mahā-mantra group showed a significant decrease in depression and increase in the mode of goodness, though the other variables were not statistically significant.

The results were consistent with the teachings of the Vedic literature, which states that chanting the mahā-mantra will increase one's qualities in the mode of goodness and diminish the effects of the mode of ignorance, such as depression, and the mode of passion, such as stress. Why didn't the mode of passion change significantly in the period from pre-test to follow-up? Vedic theory describes the mode of passion as the intermediate mode between goodness and ignorance. So I hypothesized that for

the mahā-mantra chanters some of the passion converted into goodness, and some of the ignorance became passion, and thus the overall passion level did not change. We can also understand from the *Vedas* that the positive effects of the mahā-mantra would diminish when the mahā-mantra group had not chanted for 28 days. That explains the less significant results at follow-up.

Appreciation from Students and Teachers

During the oral defense of my dissertation, a lively discussion about the study and its implications for integrating spirituality and social science ensued. After the defense, several professors and graduate students told me they felt inspired by my presentation. They said that spiritual practices are important to them and they've wanted to incorporate them into their academic endeavors. They found encouragement in the boldness of my dissertation.

One member of my dissertation committee was Dr. Walter Hudson. A renowned empiricist in the field of social work research, he helped me enormously in designing the Vedic Personality Inventory and in formulating the design and analysis aspects for the mahā-mantra study. Dr. Hudson passed away a few weeks after the defense. During his final months he spent long hours reviewing drafts of my dissertation, including descriptions of the philosophy and glories of Kṛṣṇa's holy name, and thus he received eternal spiritual benefit.

Dr. Abell, my academic advisor, described the project as very innovative. He said that the study is of a sufficiently high standard that he can show it with confidence to any colleague in academia. He was particularly impressed with the "intellectual courage to take a personal, spiritual inspiration and translate it into research and practice that adheres to the best principles of practice research." He also commended the tenacity required to challenge my spiritual beliefs by "running them through the mill of Western science."

Of What Value for Devotees?

One may ask whether such research has any relevance for devotees of Kṛṣṇa in their own spiritual lives. Do we need science to convince us to chant?

Science involves logic and experimentation. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī wrote, "If you are indeed interested in logic and argument, kindly apply it to the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. If you do so, you will find it to be strikingly wonderful." We receive the mahā-mantra through the mercy of Lord Caitanya, and its efficacy is not dependent on any logical process. Still, if we honestly apply tools of analysis to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, our faith in Kṛṣṇa's names and appreciation for them can increase.

Kṛṣṇa says that we can directly experience the effects of the practices of bhakti-yoga, including the chanting of the mahā-mantra. So applying techniques of logic and experimentation (experience) to the study of devotional life is consistent with Vedic injunction. Further, such application, in accord with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's principle of *yukta-vairāgya* (using everything in Kṛṣṇa's service), can serve as an effective means to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to today's educated people, who place their faith in the methodologies of science.

For devotees of Kṛṣṇa, effects such as decreased stress and depression are merely tangential to the main goals of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, which are to please Kṛṣṇa and develop love for Him. Still, by demonstrating the benefits of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in areas most people consider important, we can attract many people to Kṛṣṇa, who is all-attractive.

This study is only a beginning in establishing the efficacy of the mahā-mantra in terms of modern research. For instance, a future study could be conducted with mental-health patients, using the mahā-mantra as part of their therapy. Much further research awaits the Vaiṣṇava social scientist, not only in examining the mahā-mantra, but in investigating all facets of the Vaiṣṇava way of life.

Thoughts from a few participants of the mahā-mantra chanters group . . .

"Although I'm not really a religious person, I was always intrigued when I saw the Hare Kṛṣṇas singing and giving out food on the campus. It was very interesting for me to participate in this study and to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, because I developed a deeper understanding of the culture and practices of the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees."

—Jeremy Deleplane

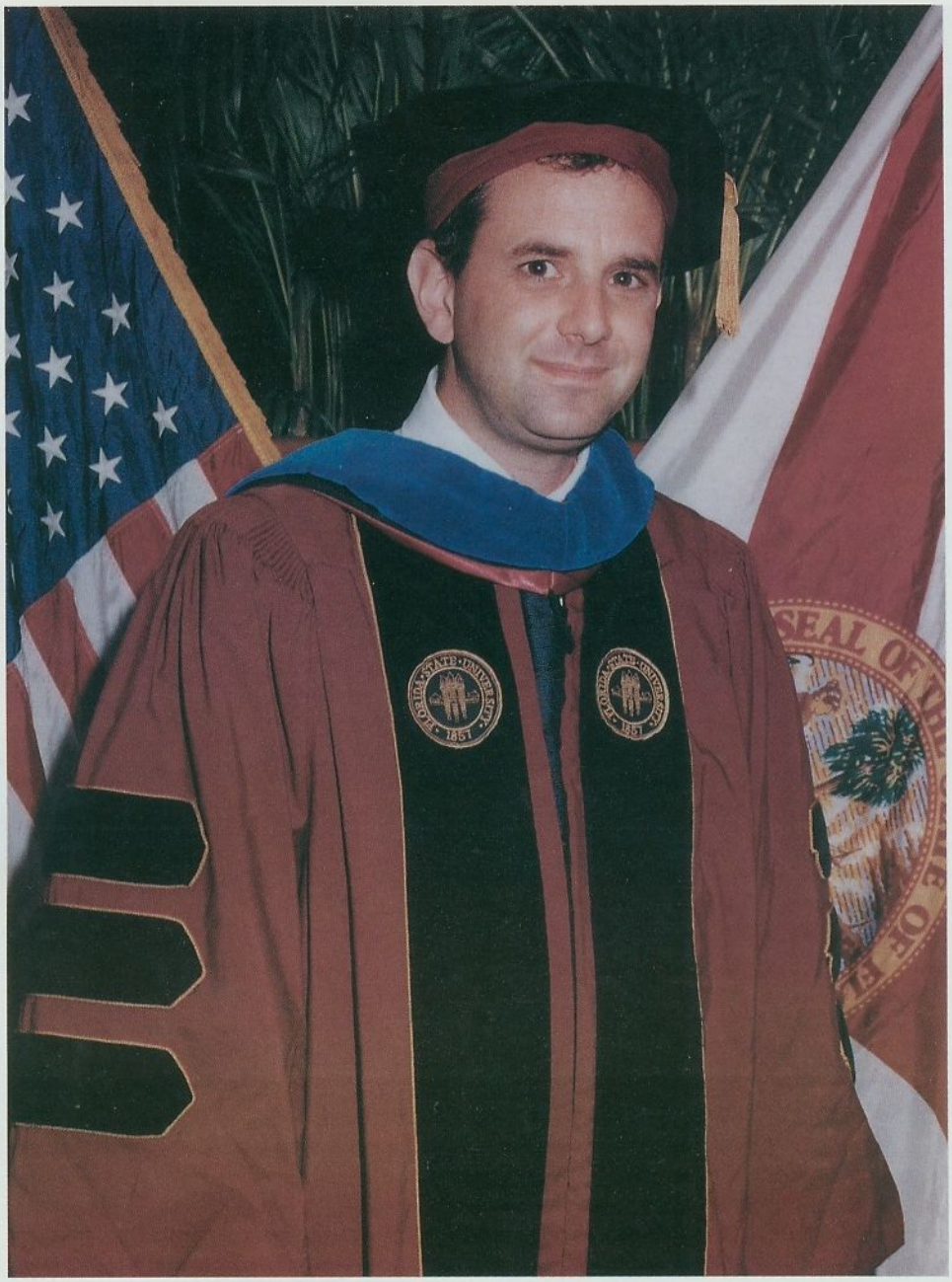
"I felt the chanting was a way to really get centered. Also, I would do my chanting at the end of the day to help me get relaxed. If I had chanted in the morning, I think it would have helped me focus."

—Shawn Stokemer

"The chanting reminds me of people who do the rosary, like my grandmother. I'd never understood the whole idea of rosary beads, but this helped me to understand. It's the same sort of chanting. I got a set of beads for my brother and taught him to chant too."

—Wendy Zilkowski

Photos: Yamarāja Dāsa



When Dhīra Govinda graduated the master of social work program with a 4.0 average, he was elected class valedictorian.

will spontaneously act for the welfare of other persons. . . . To develop such a relationship with all persons necessitates cultivating a loving relationship, through the process of devotional service, with the source of all living entities, the Personality of Godhead. The Personality of Godhead is compared to the root of a tree. By watering the root, there's no need to separately water each leaf and branch."

Commenting on the paper, the professor wrote, "I think that your idea of sacrifice and compassion devoid of sentimentality is a noble pursuit. It is tonic for the endless sentimentality that a social work faculty is exposed to. Best wishes."

By referring to his Kṛṣṇa conscious roots, Dhīra Govinda found himself passing quickly through graduate school. His fifty classmates enjoyed his various classroom presentations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When he graduated the master of social work program with a 4.0 average, he was elected class valedictorian. Addressing the class at graduation, he quoted the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta's* instruction that to understand and teach others about the eternal soul is the highest social welfare work.

Vedic Theory Of Social Work

Now, at the urging of his academic advisor, Dhīra Govinda entered the doctoral program. In one of his first Ph.D.-level courses, on research methodologies, he suddenly found himself confronted with an unexpected question: What would his research project be? His three fellow students had prepared for the question for months or years. Dhīra Govinda had one minute to decide.

Remebering some conversations he'd had with scholarly Vaiṣṇavas, Dhīra Govinda announced he would research the three modes of material nature (goodness, passion, and ignorance) as a measure of a person's well being. Since the *Bhagavad-gītā* thoroughly defines the effects of the modes of nature on a variety of human behaviors, he asserted, they are at least as amenable to research as other psychological conceptualizations. The professor, who happened to be a yoga teacher, enthusiastically agreed with the idea and offered to help.

The result of this research was the "Vedic Personality Index," featured in the May/June 1998 issue of *Back to Godhead.* It was also published in the *Journal of Indian Psychology* (January, 1998) and *Psychological Reports* (June, 1999).

The Vedic Personality Index proved to be an essential element of what Dhīra Govinda developed as the "Vedic Theory of Social Work." Graduate students rarely introduce a theory; usu-

ally they simply choose an existing one to study. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's many writings and the many Vedic references on subjects such as sociology, psychology, and social work provided more than enough source material for the "new" theory.

The Vedic Theory of Social Work teaches that the soul is different from the body. It also includes the effect of transcendental sound (*japa*) on the soul's progress through the modes of nature. This latter element proved to be the basis for Dhīra Govinda's thesis (see sidebar on previous spread).

After presenting the Vedic Theory of Social Work to a class through a play, Dhīra Govinda received the following comments from other students:

"I thought the sound therapy [*japa*] is particularly interesting. Great analogy about the chariot and the body. 'The owner is different from the body.' I really like that. It hits home. Great presentation."

"As far as heightened consciousness and spirituality, this was a valuable lesson. Maybe I'm searching. I'm interested in the parallels of the East and West approaches of therapy. Good job. Great paper!"

"It is good to be reminded of the spiritual aspects of our nature and applying these within our practice. You're always interesting!"

"I learned about disciplined application of a spiritual way of life to use with our clients."

"I learned a lot about applying spiritual practice to social work."

"I liked the analogy of the horse and carriage. The Vedic Theory was very interesting; thanks for the snack to feed my vehicle."

Dhīra Govinda successfully defended his thesis in June 1999. What had begun as a tenuous venture into academia turned into a series of perfect grades and much appreciation and success. Reflecting on his experience, Dhīra Govinda comments simply, "Everything I said or wrote came directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books."

Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa writes, runs a small business, and oversees circulation for BTG. *He and his wife, both disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, live with their two children in Gainesville, Florida.*

MIHE*

Gaura Pūrṇimā 2000 Semester

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The History of Our Vaiṣṇava Heritage—Bhakti Cāru Swami
Workshop for Strengthening the Vaiṣṇava Community—Bhakti-tīrtha Swami
Introduction to Bhakti-vṛkṣa—Jayapatāka Swami & Kaunteya Dāsa
From Śraddhā to Prema—Prahlādānanda Swami
The Nectar of Devotion *(for men)*—Aghabhida Dāsa
Astrology and Varṇāśrama Dharma—Anantarūpa Dāsa
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Śrīla Prabhupāda Is Coming—Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsī
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* Māyāpur Institute of Higher Education

BIOGRAPHY

NĀRADA MUNI

The Father of Devotional Service

One of the most prominent sages in the Vedic literature, he travels throughout the universe awakening love for the Lord.

by Satyarāja Dasa

NĀRADA MUNI is exalted in Vedic texts as one of the twelve *mahājanas,* or great authorities on eternal truth. Details of his life and teachings are recounted in the *Nārada Purāṇa,* the *Padma Purāṇa,* and throughout *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* So advanced is his level of spirituality that in these texts he is even sometimes called "Bhagavān," a term usually reserved for the Supreme Lord, and in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.26) Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself says, "Of the sages among the demigods, I am Nārada."

As a preeminent representative of God, Nārada Muni is often considered the original spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his commentary to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.5.22), "The immediate spiritual master is the representative of Nārada Muni; there is no difference between the instructions of Nārada Muni and those of the present spiritual master." Prabhupāda further refers to Nārada as "the father of devotional service." (6.16.26)

ISKCON devotees know Nārada Muni as "the eternal spiritual spaceman," because he is described throughout the Vedic literature as a transcendental mystic who received from Kṛṣṇa the ability to traverse the cosmos, delivering the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra to sincere souls and instigating advancement on the spiritual path.

"Instigating" may seem the wrong word to describe a celestial sage, but Nārada is famous for pushing people to the limit, forcing them to make decisions that enable them to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Nārada also serves as an instigator in Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. One example occurs around the time of Kṛṣṇa's birth. When the demon Kaṁsa hears a voice from the sky, telling him that Devakī's eighth child (Kṛṣṇa) will kill him, it is Nārada who instills Kaṁsa with fear that any of Devakī's children might be his enemy. Nārada thereby persuades Kaṁsa to kill all of Devakī's children. Nārada does this to accelerate Kṛṣṇa's appearance and enhance Kaṁsa's reputation as a demon, causing Kṛṣṇa to eventually kill him and establish righteousness in society. (This was all done under the Lord's mysteri-

Painting by Dṛgha Devi Dāsi

When Śrīla Vyāsadeva felt despondent even after compiling the Vedic literature, Nārada Muni, his spiritual master, instructed him to specifically glorify Lord Kṛṣṇa by writing the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

ous internal potency. Later, Lord Kṛṣṇa brought the children back to life.)

Another example of Nārada's instigative powers is seen in his exchange with Princess Rukmiṇī, to whom he elaborately describes Kṛṣṇa's unsurpassed beauty and superlative qualities. Upon hearing Nārada's description, Rukmiṇī becomes infatuated with Kṛṣṇa, giving her heart to Him in total surrender. She is thus unable to marry Śiśupāla, to whom she was promised. Nārada's "meddling" leads to the unfolding of an important episode in Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes: Śiśupāla is humbled, and Kṛṣṇa kidnaps and marries Rukmiṇī. In the fulfillment of her heart's desire, Rukmiṇī serves Kṛṣṇa as His loving wife in the spiritual realm.

In yet another important episode, Nārada chides Vyāsadeva for not getting at the essence of Vedic knowledge in compiling the Vedic literature. Nārada tells Vyāsadeva that the remedy is to describe in his writing the name, form, fame, and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Vyāsadeva does so, the result being the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* the cream of ancient India's scriptural legacy.

The Three Lives Of Nārada

Just who is Nārada Muni, and what did he go through to become one of the most respected saints in the Vedic tradition?

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes how Nārada attained the audience of God and thus became renowned in the Vedic tradition. The story begins with his previous two lifetimes. During the first, his name was Upabarhaṇa, a Gandharva, or singer from a heavenly planet. Upabarhaṇa's beautiful voice and handsome features made him attractive to women, and he became a playboy, losing his spiritual perspective and falling into materialistic life.

Once, Upabarhaṇa attended a festival put on by the *prajāpatis,* residents of higher planets responsible for populating the universe. While performing *saṅkīrtana,* the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord, Upabarhaṇa glorified the demigods. The devotees present took this action

One day, during Nārada's meditation the Lord appeared within his heart—he was able to see the form of God.

• • •

as a great offense, because *sankīrtana* is meant for glorifying the Supreme Lord only. The devotees then cursed Upabarhaṇa to be born in his next life as a *śūdra* (laborer) devoid of beauty. Fortunately, whether a saint blesses or curses, the result is the same: the recipient of the saint's attention advances in God consciousness.

That's what eventually happened to Upabarhaṇa (Nārada). When he was born as the son of a maidservant, he was inclined to devotional service and managed to serve the pure devotees of the Lord.

Nārada's pious mother had the good fortune to serve traveling mendicants, so five-year-old Nārada had the same opportunity. Moreover, he was able to take the remnants of their meals (*prasādam*) and hear them speak on transcendental subjects. Primarily these two activities, says the *Bhāgavatam,* enabled Nārada to move forward in his spiritual life.

The traveling mendicants could not find any fault in the little boy. He seemed to be uninterested in playing like other boys; he was not naughty in any way, nor did he speak more than necessary. For all of these reasons, the sages showered their blessings upon him. Nārada underwent a vital transformation and became intoxicated with God consciousness. He meditated day and night, then left home after his mother's death to become a wandering mendicant himself.

As Nārada traveled, he learned to dedicate every moment to the pursuit of spiritual realization. One day, during Nārada's meditation the Lord appeared within his heart—he was able to see the form of God. Tears of love flowed from his eyes as he gazed upon the Lord's beautiful form.

And then the Lord disappeared from his vision.

The *Bhāgavatam* describes Nārada's grief-stricken condition and tells us that as much as he tried, he could not regain his vision of God. His realization: God is not at our beck and call. He appears before us by His sweet will, and if He desires to conceal Himself, no amount of meditation or prayer will force Him to show us His beautiful form. As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master, has said, "Don't ask to see God, but rather act in such a way that God will want to see you."

Nārada then heard the Lord's voice, telling him that it is not possible to see God if one is not completely pure. The Lord told Nārada another thing: He had shown Nārada His form out of kindness and to increase his longing for Him.

The Lord's enticement worked. Nārada now meditated on the form of the Lord more intensely than ever before. His hearing and chanting of the glories of Kṛṣṇa engulfed his soul, and he became oblivious of the world around him. When the moment of death came, he was ready.

"Being freed from all material taints," Nārada told his disciple Vyāsadeva, "I met with death just as lightning and illumination occur simultaneously."

The transition was seamless, and when the material world was again created (for the material cosmos manifests in cycles), Nārada was born from the creator-god Brahmā's heart, as his most dear son. In this form, Nārada had indeed reached perfection. The *Bhāgavatam* tells us that his birth was

Nārada Becomes a Gopī

ACCORDING TO the *Nārada Purāṇa* (2.80.9–32), the *Skanda Purāṇa* (2.6.2–3), and the *Padma Purāṇa* (4.75.25–46), when Nārada first heard that Lord Kṛṣṇa had appeared in Vṛndāvana, he wandered Vṛndāvana's twelve forests looking for any signs of his beloved Lord. With great intensity he ran through the secret bowers in which Kṛṣṇa would meet with the *gopīs,* His cowherd girlfriends. But he could not find any evidence of Kṛṣṇa's appearance.

Vṛndā Devī, a prominent *gopī* who helps arrange Kṛṣṇa's rendezvous with His girlfriends, appeared before Nārada and told him that to see such esoteric pastimes he would have to adopt the mood and form of a loving *gopī* himself. This was possible, she said, only for the most advanced practitioners of spiritual life. Vṛndā Devī told Nārada that he was one such soul and could affect such a change by bathing in a nearby pond known as Kusum Sarovara.

Nārada did as Vṛndā Devī had instructed and emerged from the waters as a *gopī* named Nāradī. He was thus able to see Vṛndāvana with new eyes and enter into Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the cowherd girls.

Later, Vṛndā Devī instructed him to bathe in another pond, which came to be known as Nārada-kuṇḍa, and he resumed his male form.

The *Nārada Purāṇa* says that the lesson to be learned from this episode is that even a sage as great as Nārada must meditate on Vṛndāvana in the intense mood of a *gopī* to attain the highest level of *prema,* love for Kṛṣṇa. Such meditation is possible for only the most accomplished devotees.

not forced, as are most births in the material realm, but was completely voluntary: he was born merely to assist the Lord in His mission. Moreover, says the *Bhāgavatam,* his body was just like the Lord's—transcendental and immortal, with no difference between his outer body and the inner animating spark, the soul.

Teacher of Pure Devotion

Thus, Nārada is considered a perfect devotee. His teachings, found throughout the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as well as in his *Nārada-bhakti-sūtras* and *Nārada Pañcarātra,* are exemplary for souls on the path of pure devotion. They embody the essence of selfless devotional service.

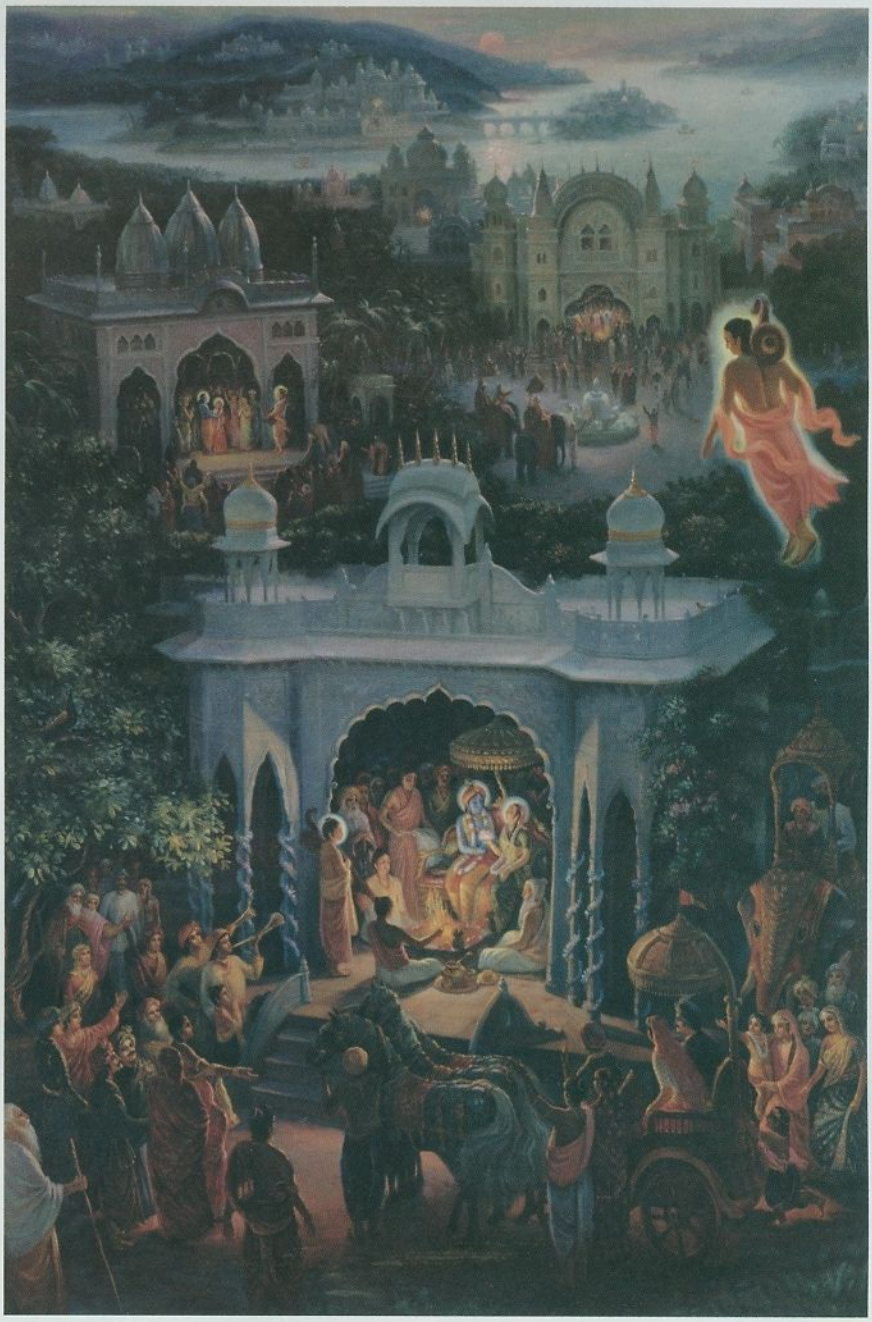
Lord Kṛṣṇa, feeling grateful for Nārada's dedication and love, once asked him, "What can I do to serve you?"

"I do not care where I may be," Nārada replied, "but I pray that I may be allowed to constantly remember Your lotus feet."

This single-minded determination marks Nārada as the perfect guru, and many great sages have taken shelter at his feet. He is the spiritual master of Vālmīki (the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*), and of Prahlāda Mahārāja, Dhruva Mahārāja, the Pracetas, Citraketu, and many other prominent personalities in Vedic history. Most important, he is the spiritual master of Vyāsadeva, often considered the model guru. For this reason, Nārada Muni is the guru of gurus.

Transcendental Traveling Musician

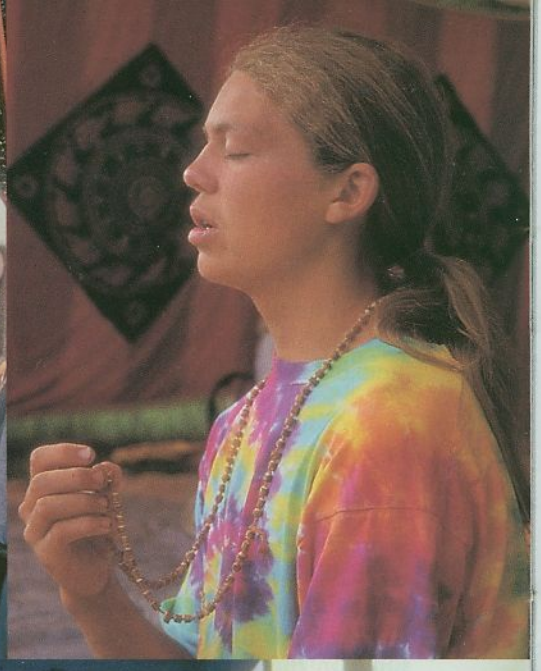
Nārada is a perfect *brahmacārī,* a celibate whose sole purpose is pure devotional service to the Lord. The *Liṅga Purāṇa* says that Kṛṣṇa awarded Nārada a *vīṇā,* a stringed musical instrument, which Nārada plays as he traverses the universe. Because the *vīṇā* was a direct gift from the Lord, it is considered non-different from Him. Nārada, then, carries the Lord with him as he travels the material cosmos, delivering the holy name to the devotees and helping those in need with his spiritual blessings.

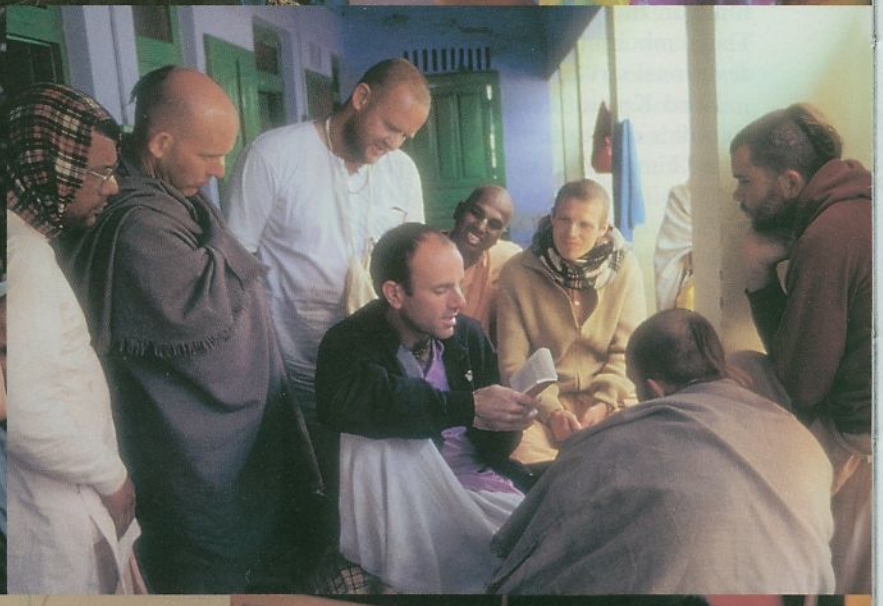


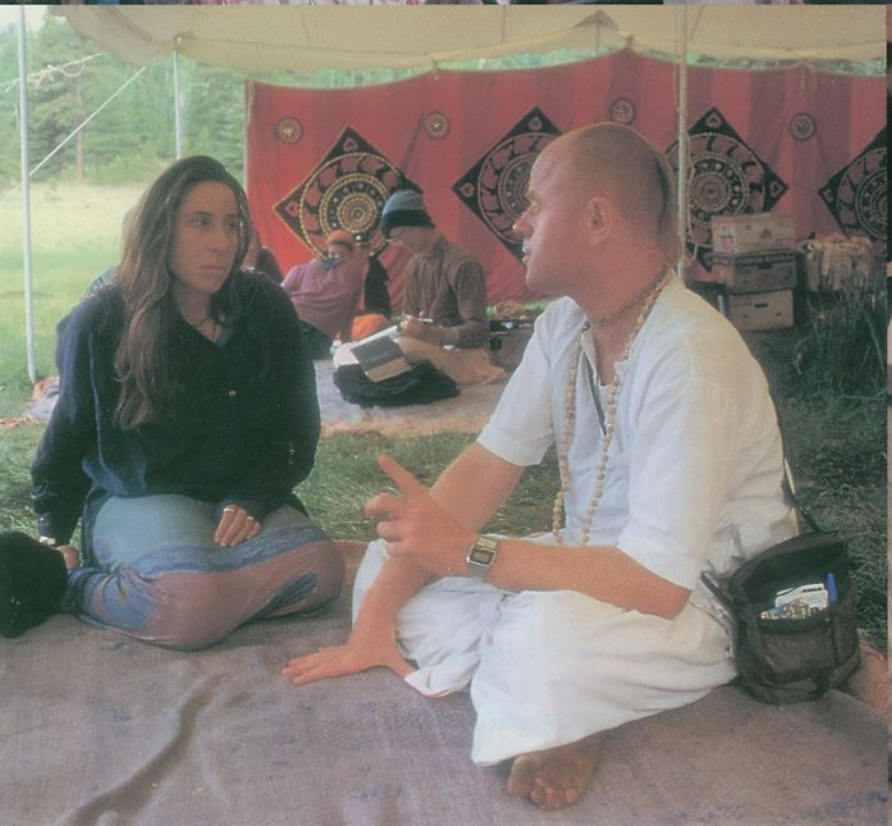
Nārada Muni once visited Dvārakā to see how Lord Kṛṣṇa was living with His 16,108 queens.

Because Nārada is a musician who travels throughout the universe enlightening people with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it was fitting that during Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance five hundred years ago as Lord Caitanya, Nārada appeared as Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. It was in his courtyard, Śrīvāsa Aṅgan, that the *saṅkīrtana* movement, full of song and dance, began on earth. In this way, both as Nārada and as Śrīvāsa, he uses music—particularly the chanting of the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—to spread the glories of Kṛṣṇa.

Satyarāja Dāsa is a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a regular contributor to Back to Godhead. *He has written several books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He and his wife live in New York City.*







Photos: Yamarāja Dāsa

2: KĪRTANA

Glorifying The Lord and His Holy Names

Lord Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach this essential spiritual practice.

by Dvārakādhīśa Devī Dāsī

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.23–24), *the devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja, a great spiritual authority, says, "Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia, and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu [Kṛṣṇa], remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind, and words)—these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge."Here we continue our series on the nine processes of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to the Lord.*

A SINGLE WORD CAN slice our heart to shreds. It can inspire a flood of joy or raging anger. Words form the lyrics of love songs and the dialog of hate. They link us in love and act as barriers to understanding. Think of the most emotion-filled moments of your life, and quite likely you'll hear the echo of words once spoken.

The gift of speech is so fully integrated into life that we scarcely consider its importance. And yet, a gift it is, and how we use it greatly influences our destiny. We may pay dearly for harsh words, uncertain silences, or artificial enthusiasm. The words we utter cause us to seize or lose opportunities. Can you explain why your homework is late? How do you answer the questions at a job interview? What do you say when your best friend is sobbing in your arms? Can you say where you were when the crime was committed? Can you answer your child's questions about death? The words you find to speak contribute to where you go and

Left: Besides the chanting of the holy names of the Lord, kīrtana *also includes reading about Kṛṣṇa, telling others about Him, distributing books about Him, and so on.*

Cleaning the Heart

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu (pictured on page 3) introduced the congregational chanting of God's holy names as the religious process for this age. He exalted the practice in His prayer known as Śikṣāṣṭakam. *Here are the first two verses of that prayer (the third verse is quoted in the main article).*

Glory to the Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana,* which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This *saṅkīrtana* movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.

O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by chanting Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.

who you become in this life.

And beyond this life. Words can be tools not only for material activities but for spiritual growth. Words written, spoken, or sung for the glorification of the Lord constitute *kīrtana,* the second of the nine processes of devotional service (bhakti-yoga).

The first process is hearing (BTG Sept./Oct. 1999); then comes *kīrtana.* The relationship between the two is direct and intimate. To properly glorify the Lord we must first understand Him through proper hearing. Hearing as devotional service includes receiving guidance from scripture, spiritual masters, and other devotees of the Lord. Fortified by hearing from spiritual authorities, one begins *kīrtana.*

Kīrtana can take a variety of forms, one of which is the chanting of mantras. For some people, the word *chanting* may summon images of mindless repetition. But although chanting involves repetition, the repetition should not be mindless, but mindful—done with an awareness that the words are sacred and pleasing to God. We must also be mindful to chant not for material benefit, but as an offering of love through words.

The solitary chanting of a mantra is called *japa.* During one's quite hours of *japa* one gains a great deal of the purification necessary to approach God. The Vedic scriptures recommend that in this age we chant the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The mahā-mantra is composed of names of the Lord, and by chanting them we invoke His presence. Understanding that alone can inspire us to chant attentively. No doubt concentrating fully on the chanting is difficult, but success in spiritual life takes some effort, or austerity. In this age, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa without letting the mind flicker to distracting thoughts is a special austerity for us.

Another form of *kīrtana* is congregational singing, or *saṅkīrtana.* Devotees gather daily in temples to perform *saṅkīrtana* before the Deities, singing and playing musical instruments for the pleasure of the Lord. Scheduled *saṅkīrtana,* or *kīrtanas,* take place in all Hare Kṛṣṇa temples daily, and everyone is welcome to come and join in. Devotees also take *saṅkīrtana* out into the streets, allowing the public to benefit from hearing the holy names of the Lord.

Besides *japa* (private chanting) and *saṅkīrtana* (congregational singing), a third form of *kīrtana* is speaking about spiritual topics. One way to do this is to read the words of revealed scripture and spiritual authorities. Devotees in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement gather daily in the temple for a reading from the

The Ten Offenses in Chanting God's Names

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra can awaken our dormant love for God. For the chanting to yield the desired result, the scriptures say that one should refrain from committing the following offenses:

(1) Blaspheming a devotee of the Lord
(2) Considering the Lord and the demigods to be on the same level or thinking there are many Gods
(3) Neglecting the orders of the spiritual master
(4) Minimizing the authority of the Vedic scriptures
(5) Interpreting the holy names of God
(6) Committing sins on the strength of chanting
(7) Teaching the glories of the Lord's names to the faithless
(8) Comparing the holy name with material piety
(9) Being inattentive while chanting the holy name
(10) Remaining attached to material things in spite of chanting the holy names

Scriptural References on Chanting

The following is a short selection from the hundreds, if not thousands, of verses in the Vedic literature glorifying the chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

"After searching through all the Vedic literature one cannot find a method of religion more sublime for this age than the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa."
—*Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad*

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is chanting of the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way."
—*Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa*

"My dear king, although Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom."
—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.51

"Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society."
—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.22

"In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship [Lord Caitanya,] the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions."
—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.32

"Those who are actually advanced in knowledge are able to appreciate the essential value of this Age of Kali. Such enlightened persons worship Kali-yuga because in this fallen age all perfection of life can easily be achieved by the performance of *saṅkīrtana.*"
—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.36

"Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead."
—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 4.71

"The religious practice for the Age of Kali is to broadcast the glories of the holy name. Only for this purpose has the Lord, in a yellow color, descended as Lord Caitanya."
—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 3.40

"In this Age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered."
—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 17.22

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They also like to get together informally to read aloud from Śrīla Prabhupāda's other books, including *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.* Listening to the wonderful descriptions of Lord Kṛṣṇa's childhood pranks is the perfect combination of hearing and chanting.

An essential component of *kīrtana* is to capture without deviation the spirit and message of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and teachings, and this is best accomplished when using the descriptions given to us by pure souls who can speak of such things with first-hand realization. So reading the scriptures and the commentaries by the saints and sages is a vital form of *kīrtana.*

Any activity that promotes the glorification of the Lord is *kīrtana,* and one especially important activity is the distribution of books about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Prabhupāda's spiritual master, called the printing press "the big drum": a drum played in *saṅkīrtana* may be heard a block or two away, but the printing press can spread the sound of *saṅkīrtana* around the world.

Perfection Through Kīrtana

One can attain the goal of life—pure love for God—by perfecting any of the nine processes of devotional service. One devotee who attained perfection through *kīrtana* is Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who lived thousands of years ago in India. Being the son of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the Vedic literature, Śukadeva heard about the wonders of the Lord and devotional service even while within the womb. That hearing created such a fervor for spiritual life that Śukadeva never attempted a conventional way of life. After his birth, he entered the forest to enjoy a life of meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit, a great emperor, was sitting on the banks of the Ganges River, desiring to hear about the purpose of life, Śukadeva Gosvāmī was chosen to instruct him. The words of Śukadeva Gosvāmī are immortalized in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

(*please turn to page 54*)

Tragedy Calls . . .

Am I Next?

The teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā *help us see beyond the apparent randomness of tragedy.*

by Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī

I HAD JUST TURNED eleven when our small island town was gripped with terror. Mary Kelly had disappeared three days earlier, and now her mutilated body had been found in the woods just a mile from where I lived. The intensive, frantic search was over, leaving everyone stunned with disbelief. In our town, people rarely locked doors unless they were to be away for an extended time. But from that day on, our family began sliding our front door's shiny brass chain into its groove.

That night as I lay in bed under my covers, I recited the same prayer I'd recited since I was a small child.

"Father, thank you for the night and for the pleasant morning light, for rest and food and loving care, and all that makes the world so fair. Help us to do the things we should, to be to others kind and good. Amen."

Then I added my usual P.S.: "Please take care of my mother, my father, my brothers, my grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and all the good people in the world."

I finished my prayer still feeling shrouded in loneliness, fear, and doubt. As my heart pounded in my chest, my eyes scanned the darkness for any movement or abnormalities. Previously, in fearful moments I'd found comfort in the thought of an almighty, omnipresent God watching over and protecting me. Today's events had shattered that image. While I had not known Mary Kelly very well, we rode the same bus to school, walked the same halls, and ate in the same cafeteria. Why would God protect me and not her? I concluded that tragedy occurs randomly and I was as vulnerable as anyone else.

I lay awake all night, falling asleep only when a faint light of dawn broke the darkness. An hour later my father's voice broke through my deep

Yamarāja Dāsa

Kṛṣṇa uses the agency of karma, the system of reward and punishment, to help us decipher right from wrong.

• • •

sleep and called me to prepare for school. I considered asking to stay home from school but quickly dismissed the idea, realizing I would be alone all day in an empty house. Dazed, I dragged myself out of bed and got ready for school.

School that day was business as usual. We wanted to forget what had happened and try to reclaim an illusion of safety and well being. But I couldn't forget. Mary's death raised questions and doubts that haunted me.

The Tragedy Lottery

To make sense of it all, I compared personal tragedy to winning the lottery. Both involved the luck of the draw. Since I had never won anything, I thought, perhaps that same "bad" luck would also keep me safe from harm. This convoluted thinking pacified my mind to some extent. Still, for the next several years I often lay awake at night imagining sinister footsteps in our quiet, dark suburban house. I so much wanted to regain the lost feeling that God, angels, or someone was looking after me. But for the rest of my childhood, that sense of protection never returned. Instead, I kept an uneasy truce with Lady Luck, who seemed to hold my fate in her hands.

Later, in college, I read *Bhagavad-gītā* and learned about the law of karma, which states that whatever good or bad comes our way is the consequence of good or evil deeds we have done. Since the soul is eternal, karma can even result from deeds done in past lifetimes.

Learning of karma made me question the role of luck in life. I began to consider that my own past deeds, good and bad, had to play out and I would get what I deserved. It also occurred to me that what I was doing today would create something I'd have to live with tomorrow. This gave me a new sense of self-determination. I felt stronger. Then another shock shattered my security.

Why Chuckie?

One evening I went to visit my friend Mark at his fraternity house. He was downstairs playing cards with his friends, and I was about to join them when I was suddenly overcome with a strong desire to work on a school assignment. The paper wasn't due for two weeks, but instead of hanging around downstairs, as I would have usually done, I returned to the small library upstairs to study.

Suddenly I was jolted by the deafening sound of a gunshot, then screams of "Oh my God! Oh my God! He's dead!"

Panicked, I ran down the steps. A young man barred me from going any farther and routed me out of the building. His only explanation was that there was a lot of confusion and I had best get back to my dorm.

As I walked down College Avenue, sirens pierced the quiet spring evening. Police cars and an ambulance sped by towards the fraternity house. I could imagine what had taken place. Was it someone I knew? Was it Mark? Who shot the gun and why? My mind flashed back to the time Mary Kelly's body was found in the woods just a mile from my home. This time, a fatal gunshot had occurred only a few feet away.

That night Mark called. I was relieved to hear his voice. He explained that a student, somewhat intoxicated, was fooling around with a sawed-off shotgun. Not thinking it was loaded, he pointed the gun at a boy named Chuckie and pulled the trigger. To everyone's shock and horror, the gun —fired from two feet away—blew Chuckie's head off.

Chuckie was a friend to both of us, and I felt overwhelmed by sadness and disbelief. Over the next few days, as I reflected on the tragedy, I remembered my readings about karma. I began to feel a strong conviction that what had transpired wasn't just a random series of events but was being arranged by a higher authority. But why Chuckie? Why Mary? What had they done to deserve such a fate? And why not me?

The Problem of Evil

Some years passed, and I remained uncertain about the conflicting roles of luck and karma. At one point I read a book by Rabbi Harold Kushner entitled *When Bad Things Happen To Good People.* He postulated that, although God created the world and set it into motion, He has no control over what goes on. God is good, but because of His lack of direct involvement, He is not to blame for our blunders. Thus Rabbi Kushner reconciled God's existence with tragic events happening to good and innocent people.

As I pursued my study of *Bhagavad-gītā,* I came to understand that the Vedic conclusion is quite different. The Lord not only sets the creation into motion, but He personally accompanies every living entity into this material world to assist us in rectifying the consciousness that has separated us from Him.

Kṛṣṇa, God, creates us to love Him. But love must be voluntary, so He also gives us the free will to reject Him if we choose. When we reject God, we enter this world of matter, where suffering prevails. Out of His love for each of us, Kṛṣṇa guides us back to His service. He uses the agency of karma, the system of reward and punishment, to help us decipher right from wrong. As our desires become more in line with His desires, He personally takes charge of our lives, guiding us on our journey back to Him. Kṛṣṇa assures us of this in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66). He tells Arjuna that as we give up all other engagements and serve Him exclusively, according to His desires, then He will protect us from all the reactions of our past karma.

Maybe Yes, Maybe No

Returning to Rabbi Kushner's exploration of "bad" things happening to good people, let us consider what is bad and what is good, as illustrated by the story of a wise old Chinese farmer.

One day the farmer's horse disappeared.

All his neighbors exclaimed, "Ah, what misfortune."

The wise farmer replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

The following day the horse returned with three wild horses.

At this turn of events, the neighbors all said, "What good fortune!"

Again the wise farmer replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

In the days that followed, the farmer's son was training one of the wild horses when he fell off and broke his leg.

The neighbors came to console the farmer.

"Oh, what terrible fortune! Your son has broken his leg and can't work."

Again the wise farmer simply replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

Shortly thereafter war broke out and the army came to recruit the farmer's son. Because of his condition, they rejected him.

At this the neighbors joyfully proclaimed, "Just see your good fortune! Because of your son's broken leg, he has been spared from the war!"

Again the wise farmer replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

And so the story goes.

This story shows how our limited vision prevents us from evaluating what is actually good or bad in any given situation. Unless we can understand past, present, and future, how can we possibly understand the ramifications of an event on someone's life? I learned from the *Bhagavad-gītā* that only Kṛṣṇa has the total picture and only He knows what is truly in our long-term interest. Knowing this, advanced, learned devotees of the Lord are not affected by the dualities of the material world. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.15) that a person undisturbed in happiness or distress and steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives many accounts of learned devotees who underwent severe tribulations and reverses and continued to have full faith in the Lord and love for Him. One example is the great king Parīkṣit. An inexperienced *brāhmaṇa* boy cursed saintly Parīkṣit to die in seven days. The king accepted the curse as part of the Lord's greater plan. As a result, he heard the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for the last seven days of his life. By the time death arrived, he was fully self-realized and departed for the spiritual world.

Without knowing the Lord's greater plan, we might have concluded that the event was a tragedy because of the loss of a saintly king. But in fact his death benefited not only the king but also countless generations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* readers.

Escaping Death

The *Bhāgavatam* teaches us to see death and suffering from a higher perspective. We learn that in our original position in the spiritual world we are fully enlightened and completely happy, and we never die. As long as we accept the material world as our home and try to be happy here, we're cheating ourselves. But God, our all-powerful and dearmost friend, arranges everything in our lives to encourage us to return to our spiritual home. We resist, though, and continue to live in material bodies because we harbor desires to enjoy separate from the Lord. And as long as we live in material bodies, death comes.

If we grasp the full scope of our existence, we can understand the significance of each event that we struggle through. Since most of us lack such vision, we need to develop faith that Lord Kṛṣṇa arranges everything for our ultimate benefit, even if at present we cannot understand how. Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.57) that in all activities we should just depend upon Him and work fully under His protection. He further explains that the mood of dependence on Him is itself devotional service. The more we enter into that mood, the more we will be conscious of Him and see so-called happiness and distress as equally the Lord's mercy.

No Fear

Becoming conscious of the Lord means no more fear. The material world is called *kuṇṭha*, "full of anxiety and fear" for the living entity. But the Lord's abode is called Vaikuṇṭha, "free from fear and anxiety."

Vaikuṇṭha consciousness manifests more and more as we chant the Lord's names, following the recommendation given five hundred years ago by Kṛṣṇa Himself in His incarnation as Lord Caitanya. By chanting the Lord's name, we cleanse our heart of the impurities that prevent us from understanding the truth about the Lord and ourselves.

Through chanting I have gained faith in the Lord's plans for me and have recovered my long-lost childhood sense of safety and protection.

Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1976. She lives with her husband and son in Baltimore, Maryland, where she works as a family therapist.

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Birth Control

Thirteen-year-old Jenny broke the silence.

"Rhoda, I was a birth-control baby."

"Birth-control baby? I never heard of that."

"The birth control my mother and father used didn't work, and the result was me."

"You mean you weren't wanted."

Jenny didn't answer. She hunched the covers over her shoulders. Rhoda leaned across the beds to touch Jenny's shoulder.

"I'm sorry. I don't know why I said such a stupid thing."

Jenny lay still for a long time. Her thoughts drifted to her family. . . .

"Rhoda," she said softly after a while. "Rhoda, you were right, anyway. I'm the family accident."

Rhoda was sleeping already. Surprised at what [Rhoda] had said, and yet, feeling as if she'd always known it, [Jenny] understood now the plea that was always in her mother's eyes when her mother looked at her. . . . [Jenny] closed her own eyes and went to sleep, too.

—A Figure of Speech, *by Norma Fox Mazer, p. 44*

ABUSED, UNLOVED, unwanted, neglected children are an image of pain that tugs at the heart of any caring person. And what is modern technology's answer? Birth control. Politicians, scientists, educators, and even religious leaders advise contraception—and its commander in reserve, abortion—as the answer to many social and economic woes.

Yet when we examine the problems that contraception and abortion aim to solve and the benefits they are supposed to give, we may be surprised to see how they fall short. In ancient history, the saint Prahlāda taught that a materialistic solution is worse than the original problem. Birth control exemplifies this principle. Let's consider the reputed benefits of birth control and abortion: no more births of unwanted children, all children raised in a stable home and nurtured with affection, more freedom and respect for women, better health for women, fewer financial burdens for families, and less of a population burden on the planet.

Myths

Proponents of contraception claim it solves many social problems. Are they right?

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

No More Unwanted Children?

The prime objective of birth control and abortion is to eliminate unwanted children. Despite the increase of birth control and abortion worldwide, however, evidence shows that the problem of unwanted children has worsened the more the "solution" has been applied. In the essay *Right Reason,* William F. Buckley, Jr., writes, "The general availability of birth control information has caused a rise in illegitimacy." In Sweden, for example, the percentage of children born out of wedlock has risen steadily and today stands at 52%. In the United States, from 1950 to 1980 the annual rate of illegitimate births increased by 450%.

One might imagine that with birth control and abortion easily available, all children, or nearly all, would be born to a married couple who want a child. But that's not the case. The number of unwanted children is on the rise. A major cause is teenage promiscuity, and 81% of physicians surveyed agree that the availability of contraceptives has led to increased promiscuity among teens. (A. Pietropinto, "A Survey on Contraceptive Analysis," *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality,* May 1987, p. 147) Teenagers who have had birth control education have a 50% higher sexual activity rate than teens who have not. (Louis Harris and Associates, "American Teens Speak: Sex, Myths, TV and Birth Control," Harris and Associates for Planned Parenthood of America, Inc., 1986, p. 53)

Coleen Mast, author of the *Sex Respect* curriculum, compares teaching about contraceptives to teaching how to light fires "safely" in garbage cans. Such an education would no doubt increase the number of house fires.

By offering some limited protection against the consequence of pregnancy, contraceptives encourage illicit sex. But contraceptives don't solve problems of poverty, illiteracy, drug use, and uncontrolled sexual desire—all of which contribute to illegitimate births. In fact, people may feel that simply by using some pill or device, they can avoid

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

Children raised in Kṛṣṇa consiousness are not a burden, but a blessing for both their families and society.

becoming responsible adults capable of moral choice.

All Children Raised With Stability and Love?

The growing acceptance and use of birth control and abortion has also led to an increase in divorce, abandonment, child neglect, and child abuse. Half of all children in America will grow up without one parent, usually the father, because of illegitimacy or divorce. More than one million children a year live through divorce. Again in America, from 1986 to 1993 the number of abused and neglected children nearly doubled, and the numbers of children seriously injured or endangered from abuse both quadrupled.

Having the right to "plan" one's children through unnatural means may lead to family instability and child abuse; it certainly has not solved these problems.

If we ask, "Why are so many children today not raised with love in a stable home?" and "Why do people use birth control?" the answers will be practically the same: the parents think sex is for pleasure only, not for reproduction. Why, then, take much care with children who come accidentally? And "accidental" children will come. Women who use contraceptives with a high rate of compliance still have a 10–13% pregnancy rate. (*Family Planning Perspective,* Sept./Oct. 1980, p. 236)

Contraceptive use reveals a selfish attitude: one wants enjoyment without any responsibility other than giving pleasure in return. Some may argue that a married couple may be "responsible" in their contraceptive use and still care for the children they plan for. But isn't that like a company employee who regularly steals from the business yet claims to be honest with the other employees? Perhaps some people can practice "selective love," but they remind us of an unusual creature—the scorpion mouse, which kills and eats scorpions, being immune to the poison. It also eats other mice, even other scorpion mice. But scorpion mice are some of the most caring parents in the animal kingdom, mourning long if one of their babies becomes a meal for an owl. Such "love" is a kind of extended selfishness, rather than selfless giving for the welfare of others. If the motive for our "love" is selfish, we will act without concern for our formerly lovable person if our desires appear to be better fulfilled by not loving.

Those who try to prevent pregnancy —through surgery, devices, chemicals, or unnatural sexual practices—develop a mentality of seeing their body as meant for their own purposes, rather than seeing both their body and the bodies of their children as gifts from God to be engaged in His service. The contraceptive users so much despise Kṛṣṇa's plan for the human body that they alter its natural function. They come to hate the responsibilities integral to their own bodies. When those responsibilities take the form of children, they may resent the children as well.

Contraceptive use means trying to outwit Kṛṣṇa, to take what one wants while short-circuiting and sabotaging

the system. That is the mentality of a thief. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that Kṛṣṇa can be the greatest cheater. We may try to cheat Him, but in the end we will find ourselves cheated of genuine spiritual life and happiness, as the cheating employee will find that his friends don't trust him and his boss fires him.

One may further argue that abuse, neglect, divorce, instability, and so on, exist, if to a lesser extent, among those who do not artificially avoid having children. Clearly, simply having children as nature intended is not enough to insure genuine love for them. Yes, without spiritual realization, our loving relationships will be more or less selfish. But the mentality of the contraceptive user is so opposed to the Lord's plan that spiritual life, with its true love and selflessness, has no chance to develop. And a life that fully respects the link between sex and reproduction is part of a foundation upon which one can exhibit real love.

More Freedom and Respect for Women?

Because of widespread contraceptive use, women have increasingly become exploited slaves of irresponsible men. Formerly, a woman who conceived a child outside marriage had choices. She could marry the child's father, raise the child alone, or give the child to an adoptive couple. If she wanted to marry the child's father, her parents and community would put moral and social pressure on him.

Now boyfriends, parents, and even husbands often pressure women to avoid or kill their own children. The thinking is, "This woman entered the relationship with a stated or implied agreement that children weren't included. Why should the man be obligated now that a child has come by accident?"

Mary Pride, a leading advocate of the return to family values, writes, "Our society has been separating sex from the responsibilities and joys of having children for over thirty years. . . . Wives, who used to be regarded primarily as mothers and therefore sacred, are now seen as fancy vessels for men to relieve their sexual frustrations. Look at the ads in magazines, stores, TV, and billboards. Is this a noble picture of women, for their bodies to be used to sell everything from jeans to toothpaste?" (*The Way Home,* p. 30)

Women who rely on contraception and abortion may feel unfettered to pursue their own desires and careers, but is that real freedom? Real freedom comes in loving and serving God. Having children, even many children, doesn't interfere with that. Besides, a woman who rejects contraception is expressing her freedom to control her sexual urges. By using contraception and abortion, others show they are hopeless slaves of lust and selfish bodily urges.

Better Health For Women?

We're told it's dangerous for women to have "too many" children, or to have children later in their childbearing years. Actually, having and nursing children prevents many of the health problems of modern women. For example, a woman who breast feeds for a total of at least seven years has nearly a zero percent chance of breast cancer at any time in her life. Most women who get various cancers of the reproductive system have had no or few babies.

Conversely, many medical problems come directly from contraception. And abortion is not only very risky physically, but often brings the mother lifelong psychological problems.

Of course, as with anything in this world, pregnancy and childbirth include risks. The risks, however, need not deter us from doing what is best for us and most pleasing to God. Those devoted to illicit sexual life are willing to sacrifice their money, health, and reputation to maintain their way of life. Even the fear of AIDS doesn't discourage them. Can we not be at least as willing to sacrifice for the right cause?

Fewer Financial Burdens for Families?

It is common in modern society to think of children as a problem rather than a blessing. And today, children may indeed be financial burdens,

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Not only does birth control not solve the problems for which it claims to be the solution, but it has harmful side effects as well.

• • •

es-pecially if they're extravagant consumers. On the other hand, many parents find that their children are a blessing and enrich their lives in many ways, even economically.

Despite their freedom from the financial burden of children, childless couples face financial burdens nonetheless, because their desires induce them to work hard for money. Instead of spending money on educating and training their children, they spend for an extra car, a vacation home, a large-screen TV, and so on. Do these acquisitions bring more joy and fewer burdens than children would? Which life inspires one to be a better person?

Certainly having children costs money, time, and effort. But, again, life is full of sacrifice and responsibility. A man who works hard so he can raise children dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa is blessed with spiritual growth and satisfaction.

Less of a Population Burden On the Planet?

Many people will argue that without birth control, families will have a dozen or more children. Yet in societies where birth control isn't practiced, the average number of children per family is six. Six children per family may seem too many for the earth, but the entire present world population could fit in France or in the state of Texas, with 1,500 square feet per person. We could feed ten times the present population on an American-style diet, and thirty times the population on a Japanese-style diet. (Colin Clark, Oxford University)

All the world's scriptures urge us to have many children, and describe children as a blessing. The only burden on the earth mentioned in the Vedic scriptures is that of a large population of sinful people who live lives of crime and deceit. The Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is unlimitedly wealthy and can easily provide adequately for all His obedient children.

Harmful Side Effects

Not only does birth control not solve the problems for which it claims to be the solution, but it has harmful side effects as well.

Homosexuality: Contraception leads to increased homosexuality and other perversions. If the purpose of sex doesn't include children, then why not relations between two women or two men? Why not any type of unnatural relations?

Abortion: Acceptance of birth control leads to acceptance of abortion. Fifty percent of women who have had abortions say they were using birth control and it failed. Abortion is simply a more extreme way of saying that one's personal needs, desires, status, and so on, are more desirable than the birth of a child. And being a form of child abuse (torturing and killing an unborn child), abortion leads to abuse of children in general. Why not hurt or kill a child who interferes with my life? People may claim that an unborn child is not yet human, but is an acorn seedling not simply an immature oak? The fetus is growing because the soul is present from conception. In any case, all life is sacred, not just life outside the womb, and not just human life.

Illicit sex: Immoral sexual relationships increase when contraception and abortion are available. People feel that with control over pregnancy, they need not consider commitment or the criticism of society. And because birth control promotes a mentality of separating sexual pleasure from procreation, people begin to feel that relationships based only on physical pleasure are not only morally acceptable, but natural.

Loss of respect and love for God: The spiritual harm of birth control is its most damaging—to individuals and society. The contraceptive user doesn't respect Kṛṣṇa's design and plan. How can I love God if I don't even respect Him? Rather, I think I would be a better God and am ready to redesign the world according to my vision. The mentality of envying Kṛṣṇa's supremacy and control is the root of material consciousness.

The Spiritual Solution

All the arguments for the benefits of contraception presume that people cannot control their sexual appetites. We expect adults to control their appetites for food, so why not for sex? Of course, modern society doesn't expect much self-control in eating, either. The artificial sex created when using contraceptives has its parallel in the artificial foods that have taste but no calories or nutrition. Sterilization has its parallel in stomach stapling.

Kṛṣṇa's devotees know that mastery over our bodies, senses, and minds is both desirable and possible. Those who dedicate their lives to worshiping and pleasing Lord Kṛṣṇa know that real pleasure comes from serving His plan, including His plan for the human body. They don't try to separate physical pleasure from the whole of the reproductive function. In fact, those completely serious about spiritual perfection in this lifetime either live as unmarried celibates or, in marriage, restrict sexual union to the time when the wife is most likely to conceive. Before conception, the husband and wife meditate on the Lord and chant His holy names to purify themselves of selfish desire so as to offer the procreative act as a sacrifice to Him. Kṛṣṇa

(*please turn to page 55*)

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

NOW WITH QUESTIONS!

PERPETUAL WANDERINGS

Lord Kapila, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, explains how the reactions to our activities keep us traveling throughout the universe in various species of life.

CANTO 3: CHAPTER 31

44 जीवो ह्यस्यानुगो देहो भूतेन्द्रियमनोमयः ।
तन्निरोधोऽस्य मरणमाविर्भावस्तु सम्भवः ॥४४॥

jīvo hy asyānugo deho
bhūtendriya-mano-mayaḥ
tan-nirodho 'sya maraṇam
āvirbhāvas tu sambhavaḥ

jīvaḥ—the living entity; *hi*—indeed; *asya*—of him; *anugaḥ*—suitable; *dehaḥ*—body; *bhūta*—gross material elements; *indriya*—senses; *manaḥ*—mind; *mayaḥ*—made of; *tat*—of the body; *nirodhaḥ*—destruction; *asya*—of the living entity; *maraṇam*—death; *āvirbhāvaḥ*—manifestation; *tu*—but; *sambhavaḥ*—birth.

In this way the living entity gets a suitable body with a material mind and senses, according to his fruitive activities. When the reaction of his particular activity comes to an end, that end is called death, and when a particular type of reaction begins, that beginning is called birth.

PURPORT: ❶ From time immemorial, the living entity travels in the different species of life and the different planets, almost perpetually. This process is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā. Bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā:* under the spell of māyā, everyone is wandering throughout the universe on the carriage of the body offered by the material energy. Materialistic life involves a series of actions and reactions. It is a long film spool of actions and reactions, and one life-span is just a flash in such a reactionary show. When a child is born, it is to be understood that his particular type of body is the beginning of another set of activities, and when an old man dies, it is to be understood that one set of reactionary activities is finished.

❷ We can see that because of different reactionary activities, one man is born in a rich family, and another is born in a poor family, although both of them are born in the same place, at the same moment, and in the same atmosphere. One who is carrying pious activity with him is given a chance to take his birth in a rich or pious family, and one who is carrying impious activity is given a chance to take birth in a lower, poor family. The change of body means a change to a different field of activities. Similarly, when the body of the boy changes into that of a youth, the boyish activities change into youthful activities.

It is clear that a particular body is given to the living entity for a particular type of activity. This process is going

(1) What has the living entity been doing since time immemorial?
(2) Why is one child born in a rich family and another in a poor family?

on perpetually, from a time which is impossible to trace out. ❸ Vaiṣṇava poets say, therefore, *anādi karama-phale,* which means that these actions and reactions of one's activity cannot be traced, for they may even continue from the last millennium of Brahmā's birth to the next millennium. We have seen the example in the life of Nārada Muni. In one millennium he was the son of a maidservant, and in the next millennium he became a great sage.

45 द्रव्योपलब्धिस्थानस्य द्रव्येक्षायोग्यता यदा ।
तत्पञ्चत्वमहंमानादुत्पत्तिर्द्रव्यदर्शनम् ॥४५॥
46 यथाक्ष्णोर्द्रव्यावयवदर्शनायोग्यता यदा ।
तदैव चक्षुषो द्रष्टुर्द्रष्टृत्वायोग्यतानयोः ॥४६॥

dravyopalabdhi-sthānasya
dravyekṣāyogyatā yadā
tat pañcatvam aham-mānād
utpattir dravya-darśanam

yathākṣṇor dravyāvayava-
darśanāyogyatā yadā
tadaiva cakṣuṣo draṣṭur
draṣṭṛtvāyogyatānayoḥ

dravya—of objects; *upalabdhi*—of perception; *sthānasya*—of the place; *dravya*—of objects; *īkṣā*—of perception; *ayogyatā*—incapability; *yadā*—when; *tat*—that; *pañcatvam*—death; *aham-mānāt*—from the misconception of "I"; *utpattiḥ*—birth; *dravya*—the physical body; *darśanam*—viewing; *yathā*—just as; *akṣṇoḥ*—of the eyes; *dravya*—of objects; *avayava*—parts; *darśana*—of seeing; *ayogyatā*—incapability; *yadā*—when; *tadā*—then; *eva*—indeed; *cakṣuṣaḥ*—of the sense of sight; *draṣṭuḥ*—of the seer; *draṣṭṛtva*—of the faculty of seeing; *ayogyatā*—incapability; *anayoḥ*—of both of these.

When the eyes lose their power to see color or form due to morbid affliction of the optic nerve, the sense of sight becomes deadened. The living entity, who is the seer of both the eyes and the sight, loses his power of vision. In the same way, when the physical body, the place where perception of objects occurs, is rendered incapable of perceiving, that is known as death. When one begins to view the physical body as one's very self, that is called birth.

PURPORT: When one says, "I see," this means that he sees with his eyes or with his spectacles; he sees with the instrument of sight. If the instrument of sight is broken or becomes diseased or incapable of acting, then he, as the seer, also ceases to act. ❹ Similarly, in this material body at the present moment the living soul is acting, and when the material body, due to its incapability to function, ceases, he also ceases to perform his reactionary activities. When one's instrument of action is broken and cannot function, that is called death. Again, when one gets a new instrument for action, that is called birth.

❺ This process of birth and death is going on at every moment, by constant bodily change. The final change is called death, and acceptance of a new body is called birth. That is the solution to the question of birth and death. Actually, the living entity has neither birth nor death, but is eternal. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā, na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre:* the living entity never dies, even after the death or annihilation of this material body.

47 तस्मान्न कार्यः सन्त्रासो न कार्पण्यं न सम्भ्रमः ।
बुद्ध्वा जीवगतिं धीरो मुक्तसङ्गश्चरेदिह ॥४७॥

tasmān na kāryaḥ santrāso
na kārpaṇyaṁ na sambhramaḥ
buddhvā jīva-gatiṁ dhīro
mukta-saṅgaś cared iha

tasmāt—on account of death; *na*—not; *kāryaḥ*—should be done; *santrāsaḥ*—horror; *na*—not; *kārpaṇyam*—miserliness; *na*—not; *sambhramaḥ*—eagerness for material gain; *buddhvā*—realizing; *jīva-gatim*—the true nature of the living entity; *dhīraḥ*—steadfast; *mukta-saṅgaḥ*—free from attachment; *caret*—one should move about; *iha*—in this world.

Therefore, one should not view death with horror, nor have recourse to defining the body as soul, nor give way to exaggeration in enjoying the bodily necessities of life. Realizing the true nature of the living entity, one should move about in the world free from attachment and steadfast in purpose.

PURPORT: A sane person who has understood the philosophy of life and death is very upset upon hearing of the horrible, hellish condition of life in the womb of the mother or outside of the mother. But one has to make a solution to the problems of life. A sane man should understand the miserable condition of this material body. Without being unnecessarily upset, he should try to find out if there is a remedy. ❻ The remedial measures can be understood when one associates with persons who are liberated. It must

(3) Why can't we trace the beginning of our actions and reactions?
(4) When does the soul stop performing activities that yield reactions?
(5) In what way do birth and death occur at every moment?
(6) How does one find the remedy for the problems of life?

be understood who is actually liberated. (7) The liberated person is described in *Bhagavad-gītā:* one who engages in uninterrupted devotional service to the Lord, having surpassed the stringent laws of material nature, is understood to be situated in Brahman.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is beyond the material creation. (8) It is admitted even by impersonalists like Śaṅkarācārya that Nārāyaṇa is transcendental to this material creation. As such, when one actually engages in the service of the Lord in various forms, either Nārāyaṇa or Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or Sītā-Rāma, he is understood to be on the platform of liberation. The *Bhāgavatam* also confirms that liberation means to be situated in one's constitutional position. Since a living entity is eternally the servitor of the Supreme Lord, when one seriously and sincerely engages in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, he is situated in the position of liberation. One should try to associate with a liberated person, and then the problems of life, namely birth and death, can be solved.

While discharging devotional service in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should not be miserly. He should not unnecessarily show that he has renounced this world. (9) Actually, renunciation is not possible. If one renounces his palatial building and goes to a forest, there is actually no renunciation, for the building is the property of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the forest is also the property of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If he changes from one property to another, that does not mean that he renounces; he was never the proprietor of either the palace or the forest. Renunciation necessitates renouncing the false understanding that one can lord it over material nature. When one renounces this false attitude and renounces the puffed-up position that he is also God, that is real renunciation. Otherwise, there is no meaning of renunciation.

(10) Rūpa Gosvāmī advises that if one renounces anything which could be applied in the service of the Lord and does not use it for that purpose, that is called *phalgu-vairāgya,* insufficient or false renunciation. (11) Everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead; therefore everything can be used in His service; nothing should be used for one's sense gratification. That is real renunciation.

Nor should one unnecessarily increase the necessities of the body. We should be satisfied with whatever is supplied by Kṛṣṇa without much personal endeavor. We should spend our time executing devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the solution to the problem of life and death.

48 सम्यग्दर्शनया बुद्ध्या योगवैराग्ययुक्तया ।
मायाविरचिते लोके चरेन्न्यस्य कलेवरम् ॥४८॥

samyag-darśanayā buddhyā
yoga-vairāgya-yuktayā
māyā-viracite loke
caren nyasya kalevaram

samyak-darśanayā—endowed with right vision; *buddhyā*—through reason; *yoga*—by devotional service; *vairāgya*—by detachment; *yuktayā*—strengthened; *māyā-viracite*—arranged by māyā; *loke*—to this world; *caret*—one should move about; *nyasya*—relegating; *kalevaram*—the body.

Endowed with right vision and strengthened by devotional service and a pessimistic attitude towards material identity, one should relegate his body to this illusory world through his reason. Thus one can be unconcerned with this material world.

PURPORT: It is sometimes misunderstood that if one has to associate with persons engaged in devotional service, he will not be able to solve the economic problem. (12) To answer this argument, it is described here that one has to associate with liberated persons not directly, physically, but by understanding, through philosophy and logic, the problems of life. It is stated here, *samyag-darśanayā buddhyā:* one has to see perfectly, and by intelligence and yogic practice one has to renounce this world. That renunciation can be achieved by the process recommended in the second chapter of the first canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

The devotee's intelligence is always in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (13) His attitude towards the material existence is one of detachment, for he knows perfectly well that this material world is a creation of illusory energy. Realizing himself to be part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, the devotee discharges his devotional service and is completely aloof from material action and reaction. Thus at the end he gives up his material body, or the material energy, and as pure soul he enters the kingdom of God.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the third canto, thirty-first chapter, of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, *entitled "Lord Kapila's Instructions on the Movements of the Living Entities."*

(7) How does the *Gītā* describe a liberated person?
(8) Why is one engaged in the service of the Lord liberated?
(9) Why is renunciation impossible?
(10) What is false renunciation?
(11) What is real renunciation?
(12) How should one associate with a liberated person?
(13) What is the devotee's attitude toward material existence?

CANTO 3: CHAPTER 32

कपिल उवाच

1 अथ यो गृहमेधीयान्धर्मानेवावसन् गृहे ।
काममर्थं च धर्मान् स्वान् दोग्धि भूयःपिपर्ति तान्॥१॥

kapila uvāca
atha yo gṛha-medhīyān
dharmān evāvasan gṛhe
kāmam artham ca dharmān svān
dogdhi bhūyaḥ piparti tān

kapilaḥ uvāca—Lord Kapila said; *atha*—now; *yaḥ*—the person who; *gṛha-medhīyān*—of the householders; *dharmān*—duties; *eva*—certainly; *āvasan*—living; *gṛhe*—at home; *kamam*—sense gratification; *artham*—economic development; *ca*—and; *dharmān*—religious rituals; *svān*—his; *dogdhi*—enjoys; *bhūyaḥ*—again and again; *piparti*—performs; *tān*—them.

The Personality of Godhead said: The person who lives in the center of household life derives material benefits by performing religious rituals, and thereby he fulfills his desire for economic development and sense gratification. Again and again he acts the same way.

PURPORT: (14) There are two kinds of householders. One is called the *gṛhamedhī,* and the other is called the *gṛhastha.* The objective of the *gṛhamedhī* is sense gratification, and the objective of the *gṛhastha* is self-realization. Here the Lord is speaking about the *gṛhamedhī,* or the person who wants to remain in this material world. His activity is to enjoy material benefits by performing religious rituals for economic development and thereby ultimately satisfy the senses. He does not want anything more. Such a person works very hard throughout his life to become very rich and eat very nicely and drink. By giving some charity for pious activity he can go to a higher planetary atmosphere in the heavenly planets in his next life, but he does not want to stop the repetition of birth and death and finish with the concomitant miserable factors of material existence. Such a person is called a *gṛhamedhī.*

A *gṛhastha* is a person who lives with family, wife, children, and relatives but has no attachment for them. He prefers to live in family life rather than as a mendicant or *sannyāsī,* but his chief aim is to achieve self-realization, or to come to the standard of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Here, however, Lord Kapiladeva is speaking about the *gṛhamedhīs,* who have made their aim the materialistically prosperous life, which they achieve by sacrificial ceremonies, by charities, and by good work. They are posted in good positions, and since they know that they are using up their assets of pious activities, they again and again perform activities of sense gratification. (15) It is said by Prahlāda Mahārāja, *punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām:* they prefer to chew the already chewed. Again and again they experience the material pangs, even if they are rich and prosperous, but they do not want to give up this kind of life.

2 स चापि भगवद्धर्मात्काममूढः पराङ्मुखः ।
यजते क्रतुभिर्देवान् पितॄंश्च श्रद्धयान्वितः ॥ २ ॥

sa cāpi bhagavad-dharmāt
kāma-mūḍhaḥ parāṅ-mukhaḥ
yajate kratubhir devān
pitṝṁś ca śraddhayānvitaḥ

saḥ—he; *ca api*—moreover; *bhagavat-dharmāt*—from devotional service; *kāma-mūḍhaḥ*—infatuated by lust; *parāk-mukhaḥ*—having the face turned away; *yajate*—worships; *kratubhiḥ*—with sacrificial ceremonies; *devān*—the demigods; *pitṛn*—the forefathers; *ca*—and; *śraddhayā*—with faith; *anvitaḥ*—endowed.

Such persons are ever bereft of devotional service due to being too attached to sense gratification, and therefore, although they perform various kinds of sacrifices and take great vows to satisfy the demigods and forefathers, they are not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotional service.

PURPORT: (16) In *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.20) it is said that persons who worship demigods have lost their intelligence: *kāmais tais tair hṛta jñānāḥ.* They are much attracted to sense gratification, and therefore they worship the demigods. It is, of course, recommended in the Vedic scriptures that if one wants money, health, or education, then he should worship the various demigods. A materialistic person has manifold demands, and thus there are manifold demigods to satisfy his senses.

The *gṛhamedhīs,* who want to continue a prosperous materialistic way of life, generally worship the demigods or the forefathers by offering *piṇḍa,* or respectful oblations. Such persons are bereft of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and are not interested in devotional service to the Lord.

(*continued in the next issue*)

(14) What are the two kinds of householders, and what is the objective of each?
(15) What does Prahlāda Mahārāja say about *gṛhamedhīs*?
(16) What does the *Gītā* say about demigod worshipers?

"People Must Know the Aim of Life"

This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the poet Allen Ginsberg took place on May 12, 1969, in Columbus, Ohio.

Allen Ginsberg: Your Divine Grace, I'm trying to imagine ways by which this spiritual movement of yours can become more and more widespread and more and more acceptable to people. I don't know how. It's difficult for me to conceive that everybody in America will . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Nothing is accepted by everybody.

Allen Ginsberg: I mean, it's hard to imagine a vast number of modern Americans living a life based on ancient Sanskrit yoga scriptures, totally vegetarian food offered to the Lord, and celibacy except for procreation. And many of us have been thinking, What form of religious practice, what form of simple meditation exercises, could be set forth in America that could be adopted by a great, great, great, great many people on a large scale? We haven't solved the problem.

One thing I've noticed is that your Kṛṣṇa temples have spread quite a bit and are firmly rooted and solidly based. There are a number of them now. So that really is a very solid root. And I think that will continue.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Allen Ginsberg: But I'm wondering, What future is there? What's the future of a religious observance so technical as this, so complicated as this? For instance, your movement requires so much sophistication in terms of diet. I mean, no flesh-eating, plus Ekādaśī, your fast twice a month from grains. And so much sophistication in terms of daily ritual, like *ārati,* where you offer the Lord food and flowers and so on. The whole thing that you've been teaching—how far can that spread by its very complexity?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. These practices are a little complex. The whole idea is to keep the devotees always engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the program. Gradually, we shall introduce more and more of this Kṛṣṇa culture, so that the devotees feel the richness and no need to go outside Kṛṣṇa consciousness. First of all, you have to understand that we are trying to make people Kṛṣṇa conscious. So how can a person remain Kṛṣṇa conscious twenty-four hours a day? That is the program.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, the orthodox Jews have a very heavy, complicated, moment-by-moment ritual daily existence for that same purpose. It is to keep them conscious of their religious nature. And that has maintained a small group of Jews over the centuries as an integral unit, but has tended to disappear in the later generations now, because modern life does not allow that much Kṛṣṇa consciousness or Jewish consciousness or religious consciousness and attention, act by act throughout the day. So

(*please turn to page 56*)

DVĀRAKĀ

Lord Kṛṣṇa's Royal Home

The city's original opulence may no longer be visible, but one can still gain inspiration from the piety of its people.

by Bhakti Vikāśa Swami

DVĀRAKĀ is the sacred city where Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, spent most of His time during His appearance on earth five thousand years ago. He performed wonderful pastimes there, including expanding into 16,108 forms and creating 16,108 palaces for His 16,108 queens. In Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa lived as a simple cowherd boy, but in Dvārakā He lived as a wealthy prince.

Dvārakā means "gateway to the Supreme" or "city of gates." Traditionally, an opulent city would have many gates, indicating the king's confidence in protecting the city. In present-day Dvārakā there were no gates until ISKCON, to commemorate its Padayātrā (walking pilgrimage throughout India) and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial, established the Śrīla Prabhupāda Gate at the entrance to the city in 1988.

The original city of Dvārakā, described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *Mahābhārata*, and other Vedic scriptures, was a fort city built within the sea. Lord Kṛṣṇa built Dvārakā to protect His kinsmen, the Yadu dynasty, from repeated attacks by kings and armies intent on killing Him. By the will of the Lord, Dvārakā disappeared into the sea at the time of the Lord's departure from this world. Archaeological excavations have brought out from the sea many artifacts suggesting that an opulent city stood there in the distant past.

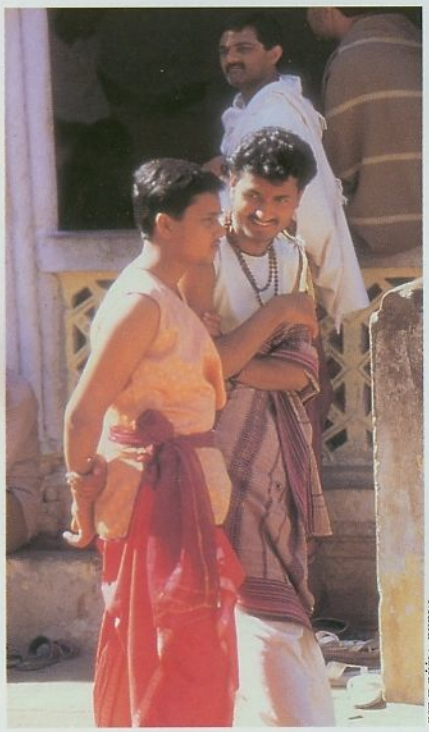
The present city Dvārakā ("Dwarka" on the map) is on the shore. It has a resident population of approximately 30,000, and a tourist population that fluctuates with the seasons. Even though it's remote—on the west coast and a long way from any major cities—many pilgrims make the endeavor to

From a lighthouse, pilgrims to Dvārakā, below, can get a panoramic view of the town, on India's west coast. Above, right: A painting of the Deity Dvārakādhīśa, Lord Kṛṣṇa as "the Lord of Dvārakā."

Background photo by Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

go there. When I arrived with a group of traveling book distributors one cool January morning, we saw buses from as far away as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, both on the east coast. Dvārakā is one of the most important places for Hindus to visit because it is one of the four prominent holy places in the cardinal directions of India: Dvārakā (west), Puri (east), Rameswaram (south), and Badrinath (north).

Of the visitors to Dvārakā from within Gujarat, city dwellers tend to visit on weekends, when they're free from work, whereas villagers go at any time, according to their farming schedule. Villagers traditionally walk to Dvārakā in groups, bringing beautiful ornate, brightly-colored flags of various designs. The groups present the flags to the temple and then perform the pious act of feeding a group of



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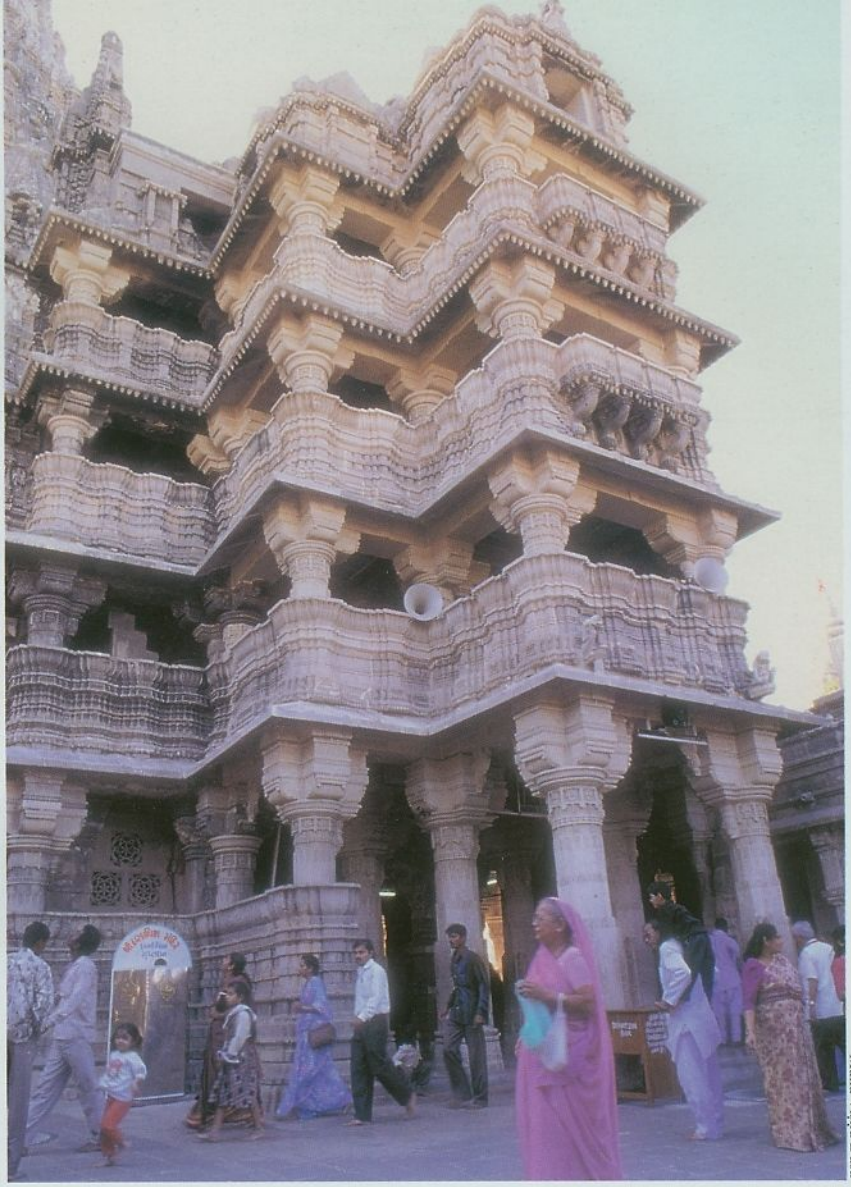

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Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

The priests (above) of the Dvārakādhīśa temple often wear brightly colored dhotīs, *and shirts made from flags that have flown above the temple (far right). Above, right, pilgrims pass through the courtyard on their way to an audience with Lord Dvārakādhīśa. At right, the sun rises on the temple, visible throughout the town.*

Dvārakā Fifty Centuries Ago

The following description of Dvārakā during Kṛṣṇa's presence there appears in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam *(10.69.1-12) in connection with the sage Nārada's visit.*

Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

Lord Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā

THE CITY WAS fiLLED with the sounds of birds and bees flying about the parks and pleasure gardens, while its lakes, crowded with blooming *indīvara, ambhoja, kahlāra, kumuda,* and *utpala* lotuses, resounded with the calls of swans and cranes.

Dvārakā boasted 900,000 royal palaces, all constructed with crystal and silver and splendorously decorated with huge emeralds. Inside these palaces, the furnishings were bedecked with gold and jewels.

Traffic moved along a well laid-out system of boulevards, roads, intersections, and marketplaces, and many assembly houses and temples of demigods graced the charming city. The roads, courtyards, commercial streets, and residential patios were all sprinkled with water and shaded from the sun's heat by banners waving from flagpoles.

In the city of Dvārakā was a beautiful private quarter worshiped by the planetary rulers. This district, where the demigod Viśvakarmā had shown all his divine skill, was the residential area of Lord Hari [Kṛṣṇa], and thus it was gorgeously decorated by the sixteen thousand palaces of Lord Kṛṣṇa's queens. Nārada Muni entered one of these immense palaces.

Supporting the palace were coral pillars decoratively inlaid with *vaidūrya* gems. Sapphires bedecked the walls, and the floors glowed with perpetual brilliance. In that palace Tvaṣṭā had arranged canopies with hanging strands of pearls; there were also seats and beds fashioned of ivory and precious jewels. In attendance were many well-dressed maidservants bearing lockets on their necks, and also armor-clad guards with turbans, fine uniforms, and jeweled earrings.

The glow of numerous jewel-studded lamps dispelled all darkness in the palace. My dear king, on the ornate ridges of the roof danced loudly crying peacocks, who saw the fragrant *aguru* incense escaping through the holes of the latticed windows and mistook it for a cloud.

Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

brāhmaṇas. When pilgrims see their flags flown above the temple, they feel great satisfaction. (To change the flags, a temple worker must climb to the top of the temple spire. It's a long way up—235 feet—and there's usually a strong wind, but the workers don't seem to mind.)

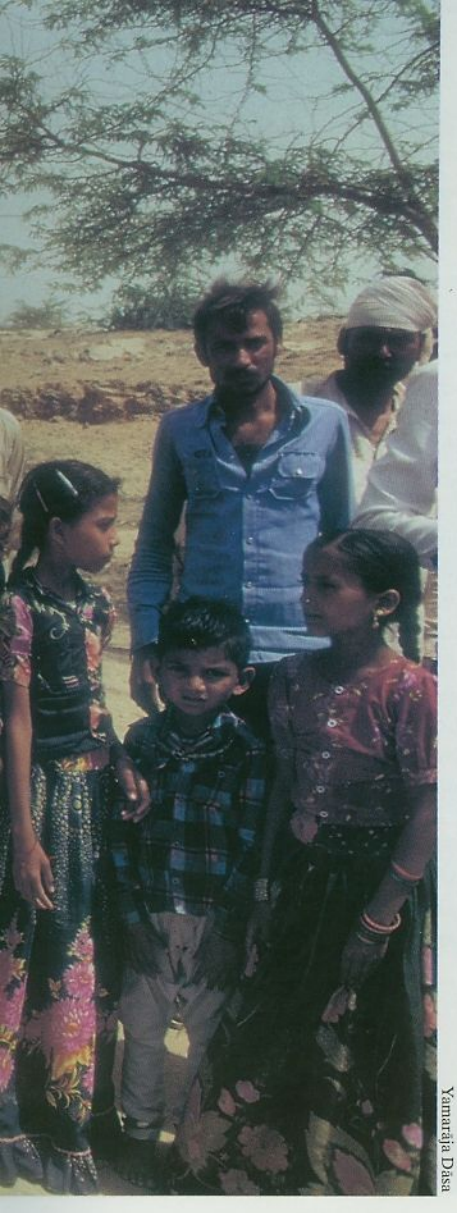
The atmosphere in Dvārakā is peaceful. The people are pious and don't seem harassed by many problems. They happily go to the temple to see the Lord. We arrived in Dvārakā at 6:30 in the morning, and although it was still dark, quite a few people were walking toward the main temple, that

of Dvārakādhīśa, "the Lord of Dvārakā," a four-armed Deity of Kṛṣṇa. By the blessings of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the opulence of Dvārakā survives. Although we don't see fabulously rich people, the ordinary people live a comfortable life.

Regal Worship

Because Lord Kṛṣṇa lived in Dvārakā as a prince, He is worshiped there in that mood. The Dvārakādhīśa Deity is opulently dressed, and the symbols in His four hands (conch, club, disc, and lotus) are covered in silver. During the worship, *brāhmaṇas*—colorfully dressed with solid red or yellow *dhotīs* and with shirts made from flags that have flown over the temple—beat drums and blow conch shells.

Jagannātha Kṛṣṇa Dāsa



Yamarāja Dāsa

Residents bearing auspicious items (left) welcomed ISKCON's Padayātrā (walking pilgrimage) when it arrived in Dvārakā in 1988. Below, left: Gujarati farmers in their customary attire. Below: Dvārakā's main gate, dedicated to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Dinodia Picture Agency

Within the compound of the Dvārakādhīśa temple, built in the sixteenth century, are many small shrines, including those of Lakṣmī, Śiva, Rādhikā, Balarāma, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Jāmbavatī, Satyabhāmā, and Puruṣottama Viṣṇu.

Directly facing Dvārakādhīśa is the shrine of Devakī, Kṛṣṇa's mother. She's looking at Kṛṣṇa, and He's looking at her. In the Devakī shrine after the *maṅgala-ārati* (the early-morning worship), *brāhmaṇa* boys sit in brightly colored clothes and chant Vedic scriptures, creating a soothing and auspicious atmosphere.

One day while we performed *kīrtana* in the Dvārakādhīśa temple, the priest serving the Deity showed his appreciation by smiling, raising his arms, and swaying to the sound of Kṛṣṇa's names.

Religious Gatherings

Dvārakā is a pleasant town on the coast, with a nice strip of beach. The sea is calm there. The climate is moderate, not too hot in summer or too cold in winter. Because the summer there is not as hot as in many other parts of India, religious speakers go there during that time, and many, many people congregate to hear them. Dvārakā is considered an important place to hold such functions.

Other Noteworthy Temples

The temple of Samudra Nārāyaṇa sits where the Gomati River, one of the important holy rivers of India, reaches the sea in the town of Dvārakā. Samudra Nārāyaṇa is Kṛṣṇa's expansion as Lord Nārāyaṇa lying on the Garbhodaka Ocean. This old temple is the only temple of Samudra Nārāyaṇa anywhere.

On the bank of the river near the estuary is an ashram where *sādhus* live. Some have been there for more than thirty years. Some cook for themselves, and some go to the *annakṣetra,* where food is given for free. They live simply and perform various kinds of spiritual practices. Their lives are not meant for materialistic sense gratification.

The river forks just before reaching the sea, producing a small island on which sits a temple of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa. The site is ancient, although the present temple is not very old.

On a side road, we found a temple where the chanting of "Śrī Rāma, Jaya

ISKCON Dvārakā

ISKCON OPENED a temple in Dvārakā in 1996 in a house donated by Pritish Bharatia, a friend of Yaśomatīnandana Dāsa, president of ISKCON Ahmedabad. The ten-room building sits in a market area that's a three-minute walk from the Dvārakādhīśa temple. The Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara are in one room; guests, staff, and supplies fill the rest. His Holiness Mahāviṣṇu Goswami oversees the project.

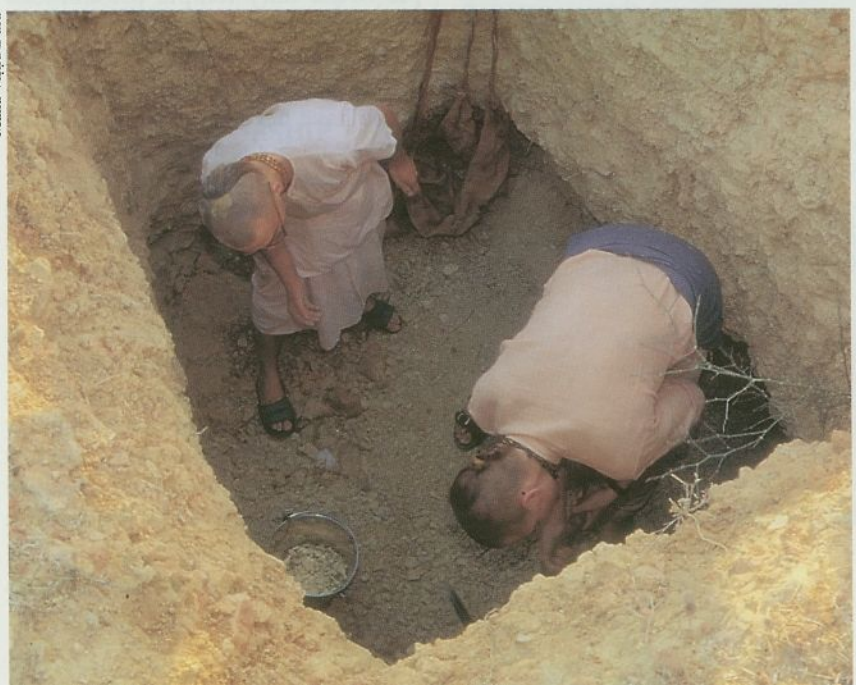
With help from many well-wishers, especially Rādhā Jīvana Dāsa from the United States, devotees will begin building a temple on the site in the fall of 1999. The three-story stone temple will feature a temple room and a meeting hall above a dining hall and an ashram.

Isvarabhai Pujari, one of the priests for the Dvārakādhīśa temple, is designing the new ISKCON temple. Isvarabhai, an architect, is known for his colorful and devotional dressing of the Dvārakādhīśa Deities. His plans for the temple call for outdoor dioramas depicting Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Expert sculptors from Rajasthan will embellish the outside of the temple with traditional stone carvings.

Besides the main temple, the ISKCON Dvārakā project includes a six-acre *goshalla* (farm for protecting cows) about ten kilometers from town. Līlā Avatāra Dāsa from London has also donated a one-acre plot in the city for future expansion.

When asked about life in Dvārakā, temple resident Vaiṣṇava Sevā Dāsa said, "Living in one of the four major holy places definitely increases my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Materially, living in Dvārakā has been a little austere because of the drought. There have been only seven or eight days of rain over the past year. Water is scarce, but by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement our temple is one of the few buildings in the city with its own working well."

As his name implies, Vaiṣṇava Sevā Dāsa ("servant of service to devotees") looks forward to hosting many pilgrims and visitors in the new temple. ISKCON Dvārakā will hold its annual Rathayātrā on January 26.



Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

A boat takes pilgrims to the island temple at Bet Dvārakā (right). Below, left, devotees dig for gopī-candana, *sacred clay used to mark one's forehead. Below, right: Nṛga Kuṇḍa, where Lord Kṛṣṇa delivered King Nṛga from his curse. Below, far right: The temple of Rukmiṇī Devī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's chief queen.*

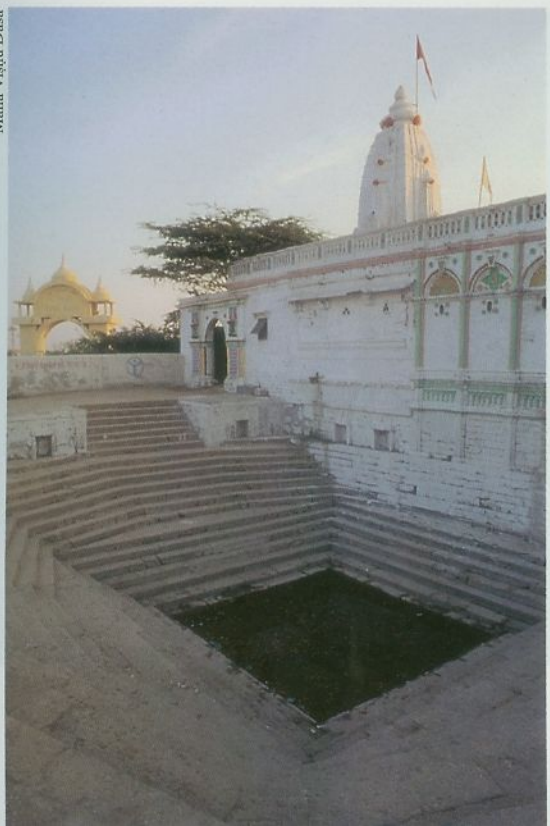
Rāma, Jaya Jaya Rāma" has been going on nonstop for the last twenty-eight years. The two people chanting invited us to join in. They were very enthusiastic in their chanting. We were there during the daytime, when few people come. In the evening more people arrive, and on festival days huge crowds gather there to chant the names of Lord Rāma.

One place worth visiting is the lighthouse (open only from 4:30 to 6:00 in the evening). From the top you get a wonderful view of the sea, the town of Dvārakā, and the dry plains beyond the town.

Bet Dvārakā

Thirty kilometers up the road from Dvārakā is a village named Okha, which most people go to simply to take

Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa



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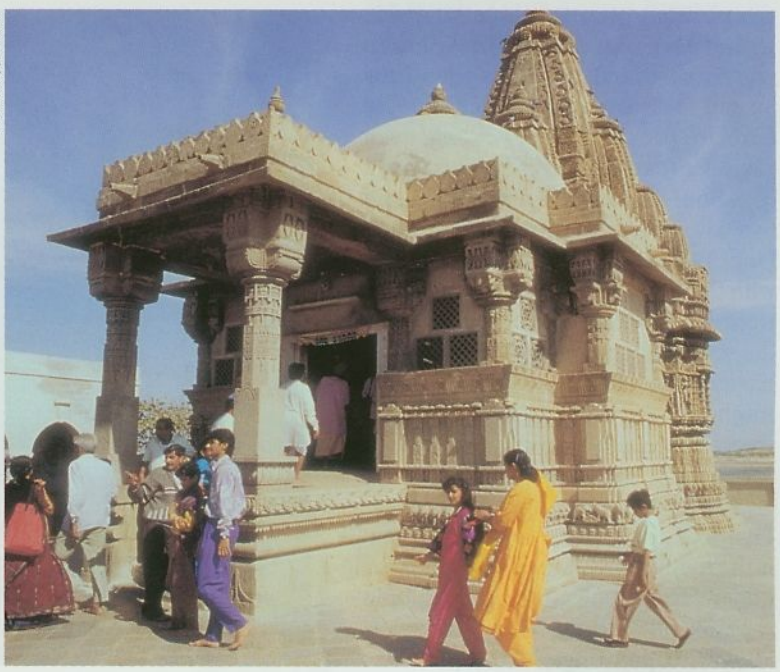


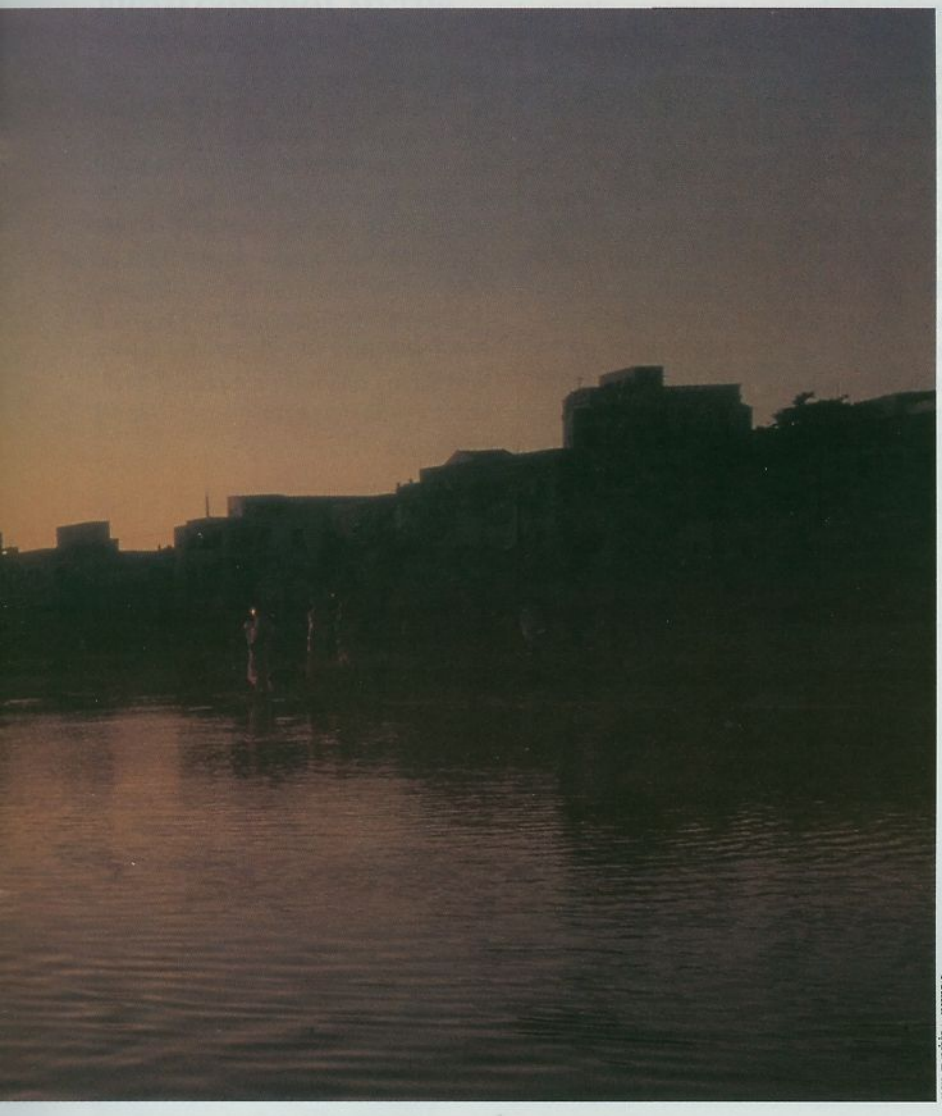
Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

the pleasant twenty-minute boat ride to Bet Dvārakā. Bet is the Gujarati word for "island." On this island sits an old Dvārakādhīśa temple. People here are proud of Bet Dvārakā, even claiming that it is the "real Dvārakā."

About halfway to Bet Dvārakā and five kilometers off the main road is Gopi Tallav, the pond where Kṛṣṇa met with the *gopīs,* His cowherd girlfriends from Vṛndāvana. This sacred spot is the source of *gopī-candana,* a clay that Kṛṣṇa's devotees use to decorate their foreheads. Everyone is allowed to take freely, so we all stocked up on enough for the next few years.

About three kilometers outside Dvārakā, on the road to Bet Dvārakā, is the temple of Rukmiṇī, Kṛṣṇa's chief queen. The architecture of the temple is beautiful, and the walls are decorated with paintings of the pastimes

Yamarāja Dāsa



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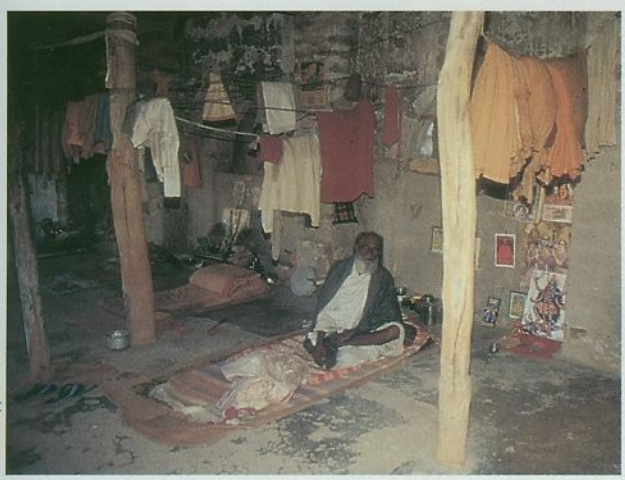

Mahā Viṣṇu Dāsa

The sun sets over Dvārakā and the sacred Gomati River (top). At left, at the foot of the Samudra Nārāyaṇa temple, ISKCON pilgrims float down the Gomati to the sea. Above, amid his few possessions, a sādhu *sits in an ashram he shares with other renounced souls.*

Visiting Dvārakā

How to Get There
Dvārakā is well connected to Mumbai and Ahmedabad by road and rail. The nearest airport is in Jamnagar, about three hours from Dvārakā by train, bus, or taxi.

Getting Around
There are no rickshas in Dvārakā because there's no need. It's a small place. You can get around by walking, or you can rent a bicycle.

Where to Eat
The Dvārakādhīśa temple has a system of free *prasādam* distribution for a limited number of people. Coupons are distributed after *maṅgala-ārati* (seven o'clock) for lunch, and at midday for the evening meal. Hotel Mera and Hotel Radhika are two of several restaurants that sell inexpensive all-you-can-eat vegetarian meals.

Where to Stay
Don't expect to find luxury accommodations, but here are some clean, comfortable hotels: Toran Tourist Bungalow (phone: 02892-313), Hotel Meera (02892-331), Uttam Guest House (02892-234), Hotel Radhika (02892-754), Hotel Guruprerana (02892-385), and Hotel Gokul (02892-554).

For more travel information, see *Holy Places and Temples of India,* by Jada Bharata Dasa, available from the Hare Kṛṣṇa Bazaar (see pages 63–66).

of Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa. The temple is said to have been built in the twelfth century.

Dvārakā is a good place to visit for several days to get away from the rush and frustrations of city life. Pilgrims can go there to relax and consider the ultimate goal of life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "The heavenly planets are more celebrated than the earth. But the celebrity of earth has defeated that of the heavenly planets because of Dvārakā, where Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa reigned as king. Three places, namely Vṛndāvana, Mathurā, and Dvārakā, are more important than the famous planets within the universe. These places are perpetually sanctified because whenever the Lord descends on earth He displays His transcendental activities particularly in these three places. They are perpetually the holy lands of the Lord, and the inhabitants still take advantage of the holy places, even though the Lord is now out of their sight." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.10.27, Purport)

When we left Dvārakā, we stopped to take photos from the road. We looked out over the plain from which the small town seems to rise suddenly across the banks of the Gomati. Dvārakā's many temple spires point up to indicate that our goal is not here but upwards. We could see the Dvārakādhīśa temple dominating the skyline, and the lighthouse standing prominently in the distance behind it.

During the few minutes we stopped to take photos, several pilgrimage buses came rushing by. The cycle of life in Dvārakā today is as it has been for hundreds of years. As new pilgrims come, others leave. Previously, most pilgrims came by foot, and the richer ones would ride horses or be carried on palanquins. Nowadays, people mostly come by bus or train, but still the cycle goes on and on and on.

This was our good-bye to Dvārakā. We don't know when we'll be back, but we certainly hope to return. And we wish to return to Dvārakā of the spiritual world. In His mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa has left us a replica Dvārakā to point us back to our eternal destination.

Bhakti Vikāśa Swami hails from England but has lived in India for many years. He teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the ISKCON center in Baroda, Gujarat.

GLORIFYING THE LORD

(*continued from page 29*)

Through his pure, unmotivated glorification of God—*kīrtana*—Śukadeva Gosvāmī achieved perfection.

SPEAKING WHAT WE KNOW

Repeated hearing will naturally inspire us to speak our realizations about Kṛṣṇa. In doing so, we must take care to present Kṛṣṇa and His teachings accurately, and we must be careful of our motives. Are we concerned with appearing knowledgeable? Are we hoping to make money? Gather a congregation for our own prestige? Any such motive contaminates the speaking and lessens the power of this form of *kīrtana* to purify both the speaker and the audience.

THE RIGHT MENTALITY

An essential ingredient in any of the nine processes of bhakti-yoga is humility. Lord Caitanya, who descended to promote the chanting of the holy names, spoke about humility in relationship to *kīrtana:* "One must chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, considering oneself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than the tree, and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly."

Constant glorification of the Lord through the various forms of *kīrtana* is the ideal toward which devotees strive. In the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the great souls are always chanting (*kīrtayanto*) His glories. Two measures of successful *kīrtana* are the continuing will to perform it and the blessing to be allowed such a hallowed service. The emperor-saint Mahārāja Pṛthu reveals the ideal mood in the following prayer:

> My dear Lord, if after taking liberation I have no chance of hearing the glories of Your Lordship, glories chanted by pure devotees from the core of their hearts in praise of Your lotus feet, and if I have no chance for the honey of this transcendental bliss, then I shall never ask for liberation or so-called spiritual emancipation. I shall always pray unto Your Lordship that You may give me millions of tongues and ears, so that I can constantly chant and hear of Your transcendental glories.

Dvārakādhīśa Devī Dāsī is a frequent contributor to Back to Godhead. *She and her family are part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa community in Alachua, Florida.*

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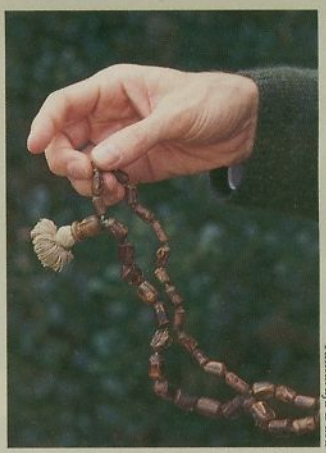
Yamarāja Dāsa

BIRTH CONTROL MYTHS

(*continued from page 38*)

says that He is present in such a union, and the couple therefore feels not only bodily pleasure but also spiritual bliss. They don't feel a burden in raising their children to love Kṛṣṇa; rather they take it as great happiness.

For people in general, a return to a life where children can assist their parents with running the household and earning the livelihood would greatly contribute toward the vision of children as a blessing rather than a burden. Spiritually, when children are raised to grow in love of God they are a great blessing to their families and society in all respects. The unlimitedly wealthy Lord will surely provide for those who wish to raise such children.

Society must also return to the vision that this entire creation, including one's own body, operates according to the plan of an unlimitedly intelligent and caring Supreme Being. We only hurt ourselves when we try to circumvent or obstruct that plan, even when dealing with our body, which we can't truly claim to be our own.

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī and her family run a school in North Carolina. She is the major author and compiler of Vaikuṇṭha Children, *a guide to Kṛṣṇa conscious education for children.*

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. Consult your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for the exact dates for your area.

Month of Nārāyaṇa

(December 23–January 21)

JANUARY

2—Saphalā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

7—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

9—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

17—Putradā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Mādhava

(January 22–February 19)

25—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

26—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great spiritual master and author of *Gīta-govinda.*

27—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great spiritual master whose Bengali devotional songs perpetuate the simple Kṛṣṇa conscious method of self-realization.

FEBRUARY

1—Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

10—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, a Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and author who appeared in the seventeenth century. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī, the consort of Lord Caitanya.

12—Appearance anniversary of Śrī Advaita Ācārya, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa's expansion Mahā-Viṣṇu and a close associate of Lord Caitanya. Fasting till noon.

14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

15—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, an eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

16—Tṛispṛśā Mahādvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans for Bhaimī Ekādaśī. Appearance anniversary of Lord Varāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's boar incarnation. Fasting till noon, feasting tomorrow.

17—Appearance anniversary of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu, a close associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon yesterday, feasting today.

19—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a spiritual master in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who composed many devotional songs in Bengali.

Month of Govinda

(February 20–March 20)

24—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, then feasting. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Gour Govinda Swami, an ISKCON guru.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not easy, because insofar as the Absolute Truth is concerned, Kṛṣṇa is the last word.

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THE AIM OF LIFE

(*continued from page 43*)

my question is, How far can total Kṛṣṇa devotion—act by act, all day—spread? How many people can that encompass in a place like America? Or are you intending only to get a few devotees, like several hundred or a thousand who will be solid and permanent?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. That is my program, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not possible for everyone. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* we learn, *bahunāṁ janmanām ante:* Only after many, many births can a person come to this full understanding. So at any one point in time, it is not possible that a mass of people, a large number of people, will be able to fully grasp it. You see? *Bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate:* "After many births, one who is at last in knowledge surrenders unto Me." Elsewhere in *Bhagavad-gītā* we find *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu:* Out of millions of men, just one may be inquiring how to liberate himself from this material world. And out of millions of such liberated persons, just one may actually understand Kṛṣṇa.

So ordinarily, understanding Kṛṣṇa is not a very easy thing. That is why, when Kṛṣṇa came as Lord Caitanya, five hundred years ago, He was so munificent that He gave us an easy process, the chanting of His holy names. Otherwise, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not easy, because insofar as the Absolute Truth is concerned, Kṛṣṇa is the last word, and generally, people are just like animals, absorbed in this temporary material world.

Out of many such materially illusioned persons, one becomes interested in the scriptures. Now, most persons—if they're at all attracted to the scriptures—are attracted to the ritualistic ceremonies recommended there for improving their economic condition. You see? People take up religion, or dharma, with the motive of *artha*—improving their economic position. *Artha* means money.

Why *artha*? Why do you want money? For *kāma,* your futile attempt to satisfy these temporary, illusory senses. And when you become frustrated in sense gratification, then you seek *mokṣa,* or liberation, supposedly merging with the Absolute. These four are going on. *Dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa.*

But the scriptures, such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* say that dharma is not meant for acquiring money, and that money is not meant for satisfying the senses, and that sense gratification should be accepted simply to maintain the body. That's all.

The real business of human life is *tattva-jijñāsā,* understanding the Absolute Truth. *Jivasya tattva-jijñāsā nārtho yaś ceha karmabhiḥ. Kāmasya nendriya-prītir lābho jīveta yāvatā. Kāmasya,* sense gratification, does not mean you have to increase the volume of sense gratification. No. *Jīveta yāvatā:* You have to accept sense gratification only insofar as you need it for living nicely. The real business of human life is *jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā.* Every human being should be inquisitive about the Absolute Truth. But you won't find the mass of people trying to come to this point. It is not possible. Don't expect it.

Allen Ginsberg: Your plan in America, then, is to set up centers so that those who are that concerned can pursue their studies and practice a ritual?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Personally, I have no ambition. But it is the mission of human life to come to this point. So there must at least be some center or institution that gives people this idea.

Of course, it is not that everyone will come. For instance, during my studies, at the University of Calcutta a professor's salary was thirteen or fourteen hundred dollars a month. And yet there were comparatively few students, and the fees collected from each student were at most thirty-six dollars per month. You see? But still, the classes had to be maintained, because the ideal must be there.

So our mission is, the intelligent persons of the world must know that the aim of human life is not simply seeking after sense gratification. As the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, *jīvasya tattva- jijñāsā:* Human life is meant for inquiring about the ultimate truth. That is the same thing that Vedānta had said before, because the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is nothing but the explanation of Vedānta. So Vedānta says, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā:* This human form of life is meant for inquiring about Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. *Atha* means "now," and *atha* means "after," signifying that now, after passing through untold lower species of life, when the soul at last rises to the level of civilized human life, at that time his business is to inquire about the Absolute Truth. What is the Absolute Truth? That is the whole Vedānta philosophy: What is the Absolute Truth? And as I have said, this same thing is explained in the *Bhāgavatam. Jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā. Jīvasya* means that for all living entities, the main business is to inquire about the Absolute Truth.

Yet nowadays, thanks to so-called educators and leaders, people are being misled. Instead of taking people to the highest, topmost stage—to the platform of inquiring about the Absolute—these misleaders are merely giving facilities for how you can satisfy your senses nicely.

Allen Ginsberg: OK. But now in America there is a feeling of spiritual bankruptcy, due to our overemphasis of sense satisfaction. Everyone agrees.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That feeling must be there. Must be there.

Allen Ginsberg: Everyone agrees that our civilization has come to the end of its possibilities materially. So everyone understands that. It's in *New York Times* editorials as well as in the editorials of ISKCON journals. So everyone, then, is looking for an alternative to material extension.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They should inquire about the Absolute Truth.

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★ New listing ◆ Temples with restaurants or dining ● Revised listing

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Gurabo, Puerto Rico — P.O. Box 1338, 00778/ Tel. (787) 737-3917/ E-mail: nrshingha@aol.com
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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 41 West Allens Lane, 19119/ Tel. (215) 247-4600/ Fax: (215) 247-8702/ E-mail: vrndavana@netreach.net
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 1408 South St., 19148/ Tel. (215) 985-9335/ E-mail: savecows@aol.com
Phoenix, Arizona — 100 S. Weber Dr., Chandler, 85226/ Tel. (602) 705-4900/ Fax: (602) 705-4901/ E-mail: 105613.1744@compuserve.com
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Glasgow, Scotland — Karuna Bhavan, Bankhouse Rd., Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, ML11 0ES/ Tel. +44 (01555) 894790/ Fax: +44 (01555) 894526/ E-mail: 106225.2716@compuseve.com
Leicester, England — 21/21A Thoresby St., North Evington, LE5 4GU/ Tel. & fax: +44 (0116) 236-7723/ E-mail: gauranga.sundara@bbt.se
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◆ **London, England (city)** — 9/10 Soho St., W1V 5DA/ Tel. +44 (0171) 437-3662; (residential/pujaris/shop:) 439-3606; office, 437-5875; Govinda's Restaurant, 437-4928/ Fax: +44 (0171) 439-1127/ E-mail: london@bbt.se
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GERMANY

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Berlin — Cuvrystrasse 1, 10997/ Tel. & fax: +49 (030) 536 98789/ E-mail: hariballabha.hks@bbt.se

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Flensburg — Hoerup 1, 24980 Neuhoerup/ Tel. +49 (04639) 7336/ E-mail: rudra.hksbbt.se

Hamburg — Baernstrs. 67, 22765/Tel. +49 (040) 397602

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RURAL COMMUNITY

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ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

Göthenburg — Govinda's, Viktoriagatan 2A, 41125/ Tel. +46 (031) 139698

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◆ **Lugano** — Via Borghese 12, 6600 Locarno/ Tel. +41 (091) 752-3851/ Fax: +41 (091) 751-3852/ E-mail: bhaktalabhya.hks@bbt.se

Zürich — Bergstrasse 54, 8030/ Tel. +41 (01) 262-3388/ Fax: +41 (01) 262-3114/ E-mail: kgs@pronto.bbt.se

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OTHER COUNTRIES

Aarhus, Denmark — Radio Krishna's Bogcafe, Thorvaldsensgade 32, 8000 Aarhus C/ Tel. +45 (08) 676-1545

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Bratislava, Slovak Republic — Za farou 12, 83107/ Tel. +0042 (17) 4371-2257/ E-mail: raghunatha.priya.bvs@bbt.se

Copenhagen (Hillerød), Denmark — Baunevej 23, 3400 Hillerød/ Tel. +45 4828-6446/ Fax: +45 4828-7331/ E-mail: dk.community@bbt.se

Den Haag, The Netherlands — Van Zeggelenlaan 76, 2524 AS/ Tel. +31 (070) 393-0750/ E-mail: premanjana.lok@bbt.se

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Oslo, Norway — Jonsrudvej 1G, 0274/ Tel. +47 (022) 552243/ Fax: +47 (022) 558172

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Porto, Portugal — Rua de S. Miguel 19, 4050 (mail: Apartado 4108, 4002 Porto Codex)/ Tel. +351 (02) 200-5469

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Sofia, Bulgaria — (mail: Sofia 1000, P.O Box 827)/ Tel. +359 (02) 981-0478/ E-mail: sofia@bbt.se

Split, Croatia — Cesta Mutogras 26, 21312 Podstrana (mail: P.O. Box 290, 2100)/ Tel. +385 (021) 651137

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Timisoara, Romania — ISKCON, Porumbescu 92, 190/ Tel. +40 (961) 54776/ E-mail: damodara@online.ee

Vienna, Austria — Bhaktivedanta-Zentrum Wien, Roetzergaase 34/3, 117/ Tel. & Fax: +43 (01) 481-9212/ E-mail: vienna@bbt.se

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Zagreb, Croatia — (mail: P.O. Box 68, 10001)/ Tel. & fax: +385 (01) 3772-643

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Czech Republic — Krsnuv Dvur c. 1, 257 28 Chotysany/ Tel. +420 (0602) 375978/ E-mail: varanasrama.lok@bbt.se

◆ **France (Bhaktivedanta Village)** — Chateau Bellevue, F-39700 Chatenois/ Tel. +33 (03) 8472-8235/ Fax: +33 (03) 8482-6973/ E-mail: guru-sakti.hks@bbt.se

France (La Nouvelle Mayapura) — Domaine d'Oublaisse, 36360, Lucay le Mâle/ Tel. +33 (02) 5440-2395/ Fax: +33 (02) 5440-2893/ E-mail: new.mayapur@bbt.se

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Copenhagen, Denmark — Govinda's, Nørre Farimagsgade 82, DK-1364 Kbh K/ Tel. +45 3333-7444

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★ **Tallinn, Estonia** — Damodara, Lauteri Street 1, 10114/ Tel. +372 6442650

Vienna, Austria — Govinda, Lindengasse 2A, 1070/ Tel. +43 (01) 522-2817

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

RUSSIA

Astrahan — 141052, 8-59, Botvina st./ Tel. +7 (8510) 28-9431
Chita — 27, Kurnatovskogo st./ Tel. +7 (30222) 23-4971 or -0911/ E-mail: kar@rex.chita.ru
Ekaterinburg — 620078, G. Ekaterinburg, per. Otdelniy 5DK VOG/ Tel. +7 (3432) 74-2200 or 49-5262/ E-mail: ekaterinburg@cis.bbt.se
Irkutsk — st. Krimskaya 6A/ Tel. (3952) 38-71-32 or 3240-62/ E-mail: iosk@iosk.irkutsk.su
Kazan — 13, Sortirovochnaya st, pos.Yudino/ Tel. +7 (8432) 55-2529 or 42-9991
Krasnodar — 418, Stepnaya st., selo Elizavetinskoye, Krsnodarski krai/ Tel. +7 (8612) 50-1694
Kurjinovo — 8, Shosseinaya st., pos. Ershovo, Urupski region, Karachayevo-Cherkessia
Moscow — 8/3, Khoroshevskoye sh. (mail: P.O. Box 69), 125284/ Tel. +7 (095) 255-6711/ Tel. & fax: +7 (095) 945-3317
Moscow — Nekrasovsky pos., Dmitrovsky reg., 141700/ Tel. +7 (095) 577-8543, -8601, or -8775/ Fax: +7 (095) 446-4746
Murmansk — 16, Frolova st. (mail: P.O. Box 5823)/ Tel. +7 (8152) 58-9284/ E-mail: upendra@mun.rospac.ru
Nijny Novgorod — 14b, Chernigovskaya st./ Tel. +7 (8312) 30-5197 or 25-2592/ E-mail: info@iskcon.nnov.ru
Novorossiysk — 117, Shillerovskaya st./ Tel. +7 (86134) 38-926 or 51-415
Novosibirsk —18/2 Kholodilynaya st., 630001/ Tel. +7 (3832) 46-2655 or -2666
Omsk — 664099, 42 10th Severnaya st. (mail: P.O. Box 8741)/ Tel. +7 (3812) 24-5310 or 41-4051
Perm — 12, Verhnekuryinskaya st., 614065/ Tel. +7 (3422) 33-5740 or 27-0681/ E-mail: ffl@pi.ccl.ru
Rostov-Na-Donu — 84/1, Saryana st., 344025 (mail: P.O. Box 64, 344007)/ Tel. & fax: +7 (8632) 51-0456
Samara — 122, Aeroportovskoye sh., Zubchininovka/ Tel. +7 (8462) 97-0318 or -0323
Simbirsk — 10, Glinki st., 432002/ Tel. +7 (8422) 21-4016
Sochi — 81a, Lesnaya st., Bytha/ Tel. +7 (8622) 98-5639/ Tel. & fax: +7 (8622) 97-2483
Ulan-Ude — 670013, Prirechnaya str. 23/ Tel. +7 (3012) 30-795/ E-mail: abpchk@burnet. siberia.ru
Vladimir — 60000, Nikolo-Galeyskaya st. 56/25/ Tel. +7 (0922) 32-6726/ E-mail: vladimir@cis.bbt.se
Vladivostok — 5–1, Rudneva st., 690087/ Tel. +7 (4232) 23-6685

RESTAURANTS

Ekaterinburg — Sankirtana, 33 Bardina st./ Tel. +7 (3432) 41-2737
St. Petersburg — Govinda's, 58, Angliysky pr., 190008/ Tel. +7 (812) 113-7896
Vladivostok — Gopal's, 10/12, Oleansky pr./ Tel. +7 (4232) 26-8943/ E-mail: vrajendra.kumar.pvs@bbt.se

UKRAINE

Dnepropetrovsk — Kalininskiy spusk 39/ Tel. +73 (0562) 42-3631 or 45-4709/ E-mail: vibhuti@iskcon.dp.ua
Donetsk — 22, Rubensa st., Makeyevka 339018/ Tel. +380 (0622) 94-9104 or -3140/ E-mail: premada@iskcon.donetsk.ua
Kharkov — 43, Verhnegiyovskaya st., Holodnaya Gora, 310015/ Tel. +380 (0572) 20-2167 or 72-6869/ E-mail: kharkov@iskcon.kharkov.ua
Kiev — Dmitrievskaya, 21-13/ Tel. +380 (044) 219-1041 or -1042/ Tel. & fax: +380 (044) 244-4934/ E-mail: kiev@bbt.se
Kiev — 16, Zorany per., 254078/ Tel. +380 (044) 433-8312, or 434-7028 or -5533/ E-mail: kiev@bbt.se
Lvov — 4, Aurora st., Bldg. No. 4, 290032/ Tel. +380 (0322) 33-3106 or 72-8756
Nikolaev — 5-8, Sudostroitelny per., 327052/ Tel. +380 (0510) 35-1734/ E-mail: vandya@iskcon.aip.nikolaev.ua
Vinnica — 5, Chkalov st., 28601/ Tel. +380 (0432) 32-3152/ E-mail: om@iskcon.vinnica.ua

OTHER COUNTRIES

Almaty, Kazakstan — 5, Kommunarov per., 480022/ Tel. +7 (327) 235-3830 or -3930/ E-mail: advaita@advaita.itpm.alma-ata.su
Baku, Azerbaijan — 2, Zardobi per., Uzbekistan st., pos. 8th km. 370060/ Tel. +994 (12) 21-2376/ E-mail: baku@bbt.se
Bishkek, Kirgizstan — 5, Omsky per., 720007/ Tel. +7 (3312) 24-2230 or 44-3776/ E-mail: ildar@nlpub.freenet.bishkek.su
Dushanbe, Tadjikistan — 38, Anzob st., 734001/ Tel. +7 (3772) 27-1920 or -3990
Kishinev, Moldova — 13, A. Popovich st., 277022/ Tel. +373 (2) 55-8099 or 76-9254/ E-mail: kishinev@cis.bbt.se
Minsk, Belarus — 11, Pavlova st., 220053/ Tel. +375 (172) 13-0629/ E-mail: minsk@cis.bbt.se
Sukhumi, Georgia — st. Pr-t Mira d 274/ Tel. +995 (8122) 2-9954
Tashkent, Uzbekistan — 54, Chervyakova st., 700005/ Tel. +7 (3712) 93-0352 or 34-4612/ E-mail: root@krish.tashkent.su
Tbilisi, Georgia — 16, Kacharava st., Avchalskoye sh., 380053/ Tel. +995 (32) 62-3326 or 98-5812/ E-mail: nandapriya.hks@bbt.se

RESTAURANT

Almaty, Kazakstan — 4, Zalomova st., 480037/ Tel. +7 (327) 235-1444

AUSTRALASIA

AUSTRALIA

Adelaide — 227 Henley Beach Rd., Torrensville, SA 5031/ Tel. +61 (08) 8234-1378/ Fax: (08) 8234-1481/ E-mail: nash0024@flinders.edu.au
Brisbane — 95 Bank Rd., Graceville (mail: P.O. Box 83, Indooroopilly), QLD 4068/ Tel. +61 (07) 3379-5455/ Fax: +61 (07) 3379-5880/ E-mail: brisbane@bbt.se
Canberra — 117 Hawksbury Crescent, Farrer, ACT 2607/ Tel. +61 (02) 6290-1869/ Fax: +61 (06) 286-4700/ E-mail: adi-p@msn.com
Melbourne — 197 Danks St., Albert Park (mail: P.O. Box 125), VIC 3206/ Tel. +61 (03) 9699-5122/ Fax: +61 (03) 9690-4093/ E-mail: melbourne@iskcon.net
Perth — 144 Railway Parade (mail: P.O. Box 102), Bayswater, WA 6053/ Tel. +61 (08) 9370-1552/ Fax: +61 (08) 9272-6636/ E-mail: krishnas@iinet.net.au
Sydney — 180 Falcon St., North Sydney, NSW 2060 (mail: P.O. Box 459, Cammeray, NSW 2062)/ Tel. +61 (029) 9959-4558/ Fax: +61 (029) 9957-1893/ E-mail: sraduucp@sraddha.dialix.oz.au

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Bambra (New Nandagram) — Oak Hill, Dean's Marsh Rd. VIC 3241/ Tel. +61 (052) 887383/ Fax: +61 (052) 887309
Millfield, NSW — New Gokula Farm, Lewis Lane (off Mt. View Rd., near Cessnock [mail: P.O. Box 399, Cessnock]), NSW 2325/ Tel. +61 (049) 981800/ Fax: (Sydney temple)
Murwillumbah (New Govardhana) — Tyalgum Rd., Eungella, via Murwillumbah (mail: P.O. Box 687), NSW 2484/ Tel. & fax: +61 (02) 6672-6579 or -3047

RESTAURANTS

Adelaide — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 79 Hindley St., SA 5000/ Tel. +61 (08) 8231-5258
Brisbane — Govindas, 1st floor, 99 Elizabeth St., QLD 4000/ Tel. +61 (07) 3210-0255
Brisbane — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 190 Brunswick St., Fortitude Valley, QLD/ Tel. +61 (07) 3854-1016/ E-mail: brisbane@bbt.se
Melbourne — Crossways, 1st Floor, 123 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-2939/ E-mail: crossways@iskcon.net
Melbourne — Gopals, 139 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-1578
Perth — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 200 William St., Northbridge, WA 6003/ Tel. +61 (08) 9227-1684/ E-mail: perth@bbt.se
Sydney — Hare Krishna Food for Life, 529b King St., Newtown, NSW 2042/ Tel. +61 (02) 9550-6524

NEW ZEALAND, FIJI, AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Christchurch, NZ — 83 Bealey Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 25-190)/ Tel. +64 (03) 366-5174/ Fax: +64 (03) 366-1965/ E-mail: iskconchch@clear.net.nz
Labasa, Fiji — Delailabasa (mail: P.O. Box 133)/ Tel. +679 812912/ E-mail: fiji@bbt.se
Lautoka, Fiji — 5 Tavewa Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 125)/ Tel. +679 664112/ Fax: +679 663039/ E-mail: fiji@bbt.se
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea — Section 23, Lot 46, Gordonia St., Hohola (mail: P.O. Box 571, POM NCD)/ Tel. +675 259213
Rakiraki, Fiji — Rewasa (mail: P.O. Box 204)/ Tel. +679 694243/ E-mail: fiji@bbt.se
Suva, Fiji — Joyce Place, Off Pilling Rd., Nasinu 7½ miles (mail: P.O. Box 2183, Govt. Bldgs.)/ Tel. +679 393 599/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
Wellington, NZ — 105 Newlands Rd., Newlands (mail: P.O. Box 2753)/ Tel. +64 (04) 478-1414

RURAL COMMUNITY

Auckland, NZ (New Varshan) — Hwy. 28, Riverhead, next to Huapai Golf Course (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu)/ Tel. +64 (09) 412-8075/ Fax: +64 (09) 412-7130

RESTAURANTS

Auckland, NZ — Gopal's, Civic House (1st floor), 291 Queen St./ Tel. +64 (09) 303-4885
Christchurch, NZ — Gopal's, 143 Worcester St./ Tel. +64 (03) 366-7035/ E-mail: iskconchch@ckar.net.nz
Labasa, Fiji — Hare Krishna Restaurant, Naseakula Road/ Tel. +679 811364
Lautoka, Fiji — Gopal's, Corner of Yasawa St. and Naviti St./ Tel. +679 662990
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, 18 Pratt St./ Tel. +679 314154/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Dolphins FNPF Place, Victoria Parade/ Tel. +679 314154/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Terry Walk, Cumming St./ Tel. +679 312295/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj

AFRICA

GHANA

Accra — Samsam Rd., Off Accra-Nsawam Hwy., Medie, Accra North (mail: P.O. Box 11686)
Kumasi — P.O. Box 101, U.S.T
Nkawkaw — P.O. Box 69
Sunyani — South Ridge Estates, P.O. Box 685
Takoradi — New Amanful, P.O. Box 328
Tarkwa — State Housing Estate, Cyanide

RURAL COMMUNITY

Eastern Region — Hare Krishna Farm Community, P.O. Box 15, Old Akrade

NIGERIA

Abeokuta — Ibadan Rd., Obanatoka (mail: P.O. Box 5177)
Benin City — 108 Lagos Rd., Uselu/ Tel. +234 (052) 247900
Enugu — 56, Destiny Layout, Old Abakaliki Rd., Near Enugu Airport, Emene (by Efemeluna Bus stop)
Ibadan — 700 meters from Iwo Rd., Ibadan-Lagos Express Way (mail: UIPO Box 9996)/ E-mail: gboyega@ibadan.skannet.com
Jos — Airforce Base, Abattoir Rd., by Nammua, Ginrng Village (mail: P.O. Box 6557)
Kaduna — Federal Housing Estate, Abuja Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 1121), Goningora Village
Lagos — 12, Gani Williams Close, off Osolo Way, Ajaoo Estate 7/8 Bus stop, International Airport Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 8793, Marina)/ Tel. & fax +234 (01) 876169/ E-mail: adolphus@nipost.pinet.net
Port Harcourt — Umuebule 11, 2nd tarred road (mail: P.O. Box 4429), Trans Amadi
Warri — Okwodiete Village, Kilo 8, Effurun/Orerokpe Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 1922)

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town — 17 St. Andrews Rd., Rondebosch 7700/ Tel. +27 (021) 689-1529/ Fax: +27 (021) 686-8233/ E-mail: cape.town@bbt.se
◆ **Durban, South Africa** — 50 Bhaktivedanta Swami Circle (mail: P.O. Box 56003), Chatsworth, 4030/ Tel. +27 (031) 403-3328/ Fax: +27 (031) 403-4429/ E-mail: iskcon.durban@bbt.se

◆ **Johannesburg** — 7971 Capricon St. (Entrance on Nirvana Dr.), Ext. 9, Lenasia (mail: P.O. Box 926, Lenasia, 1820)/ Tel. +27 (011) 854-1975 or 852-3176/ Tel. & fax: +27 (011) 852-3176/ E-mail: iskconjh@iafrica.com
Port Elizabeth — 15 Whitehall Court, Western Road 6000/ Tel. & fax +27 (041) 534330
Pretoria — 1189 Church St., Hatfield 0083 (mail: P.O. Box 14077, Hatfield 0028)/ Tel. & fax: +27 (12) 342-6216/ E-mail: iskconpt@global.co.za

OTHER COUNTRIES

Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire — AICK-CI, 01 B.P. 8366
Gaborone, Botswana — P.O. Box 201003/ Tel. +267 307768/ Fax: +267 301988
Kampala, Uganda — Bombo Rd., near Makerere University (mail: P.O. Box 1647)/ Fax: +256 (041) 251145
Kisumu, Kenya — P.O. Box 547/ Tel. +254 (035) 42546/ Fax: +254 (035) 43294/ E-mail: pundarika.gkg@bbt.se
Marondera, Zimbabwe — 6 Pine Street (mail: P.O. Box 339)/ Tel. +263 (028) 887-7801
Mombasa, Kenya — Hare Krishna House, Sauti Ya Kenya and Kisumu Rds. (mail: P.O. Box 82224)/ Tel. +254 (011) 312248
Nairobi, Kenya — Muhuroni Close, off West Nagara Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 28946)/ Tel. +254 (02) 744365/ Fax: +254 (02) 740957
Phoenix, Mauritius — Hare Krishna Land, Pont Fer (mail: P. O. Box 108, Quartre Bornes)/ Tel. +230 696-5804/ Fax: +230 686-8576/ E-mail: iskcon.hkl@bow.intnet.mu
Rose Hill, Mauritius —13 Gordon St./ Tel. +230 454-5275/ E-mail: iskcon.hkl@intnet.mu

RURAL COMMUNITY

Mauritius (ISKCON Vedic Farm) — Hare Krishna Rd., Vrindaban/ Tel. +230 418-3955/ E-mail: iskcon.hkl@intnet.mu
Uganda — 9 Dewington Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 1647), Kampala/ Tel. +256 (041) 232302

LATIN AMERICA

BOLIVIA

Cochabamba — Av. Heroinas E-435 Apt. 3 (mail: P. O. Box 2070)/ Tel. & fax: +591 (042) 54346/ E-mail: bbt@pino.cbb.entelnet.bo
◆ **La Paz** — Pasaje Jauregui, 2262/ Tel. +591 (02) 390458/ Tel. & fax: +591 (02) 392710/ E-mail: maturesh@bo.net
◆ **Santa Cruz** — Calle 27 de Mayo No. 99 esq. Justo Bazan/ Tel. & fax: +591 (03) 345189/ E-mail: sistemas@mitai.nrs.bolnet.bo

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Cochabamba — Restaurant Gopal, calle España N-250 (Galeria Olimpia)/ Tel. ¡91 (042) 34082
Cochabamba — Restaurant Govinda, calle Mexico #E0303/ Tel. +591)d42) 22568
Cochabamba — Restaurant Tulasi, Av. Heroinas E-262
La Paz — Restaurant Imperial, Calle Sagarnaga No. 213
Oruro — Restaurant Govinda, Calle 6 de Octubre No. 6071
Santa Cruz — Snack Govinda, Calle Bolivar esq. Av. Argomosa (primer anillo)/ Tel. +591 (03) 345189
Sucre — Restaurant Sat Sanga, Calle Tarapacá No. 161/ Tel. +591 (64) 22547

RURAL COMMUNITY

Bolivia — (contact ISKCON Cochabamba)

BRAZIL

Belém, PA — Av. Almirante Tamandarí, 1012, Centro, CEP 66023 000/ Tel. +55 (091) 243-0558/ E-mail: krsnadas@libnet.com.br
◆ **Belo Horizonte, MG** — R. Ametista, 212, Prado, CEP 30410 420/ Tel. +55 (031) 332-8460/ E-mail: iskconmg@gold.com.br
Campina Grande, PB — R. Verancio Neiva, 136, Centro/ E-mail: mnama@netwaybbs.com.br
◆ **Curitiba, PR** — Alameda Cabral, 670, Centro, CEP 80410 210/ Tel. +55 (041) 277-3176/ E-mail: nataraj@crt.sol.com.br
Florianópolis, SC — R. Cesar Augusto de Souza, 319, Careanos, CEP 88047 440/ E-mail: iswara@matrix.com.br
Fortaleza, CE — R. José Lourenço, 2114, Aldeota, CEP 60115 228 / Tel. +55 (085) 264-1273 E-mail: harece@brhs.com.br
Manaus, AM — Av. 7 de Setembro, 1599, Centro, CEP 69005 141/ Tel. +55 (092) 232-0202/ E-mail: iskconam@internext.com.br
Natal, RN — Praia de Serinhaem, 2254, Ponta Negra, CEP 55092 180
Porto Alegre, RS — R. Tomás Flores, 331, Bonfim, CEP 90035 201/ Tel. +55 (051) 233-1474 E-mail: taptakan@zaz.com.br
Recife, PE — R. Demóclitos de Souza Filho, 235, Madalena, 50001 970/ E-mail: harerama@elogica.com.br
Ribeirão Preto, SP — R. Carlos Gomes, 2315, Campos Elásios, CEP 14085 400/ Tel. +55 (016) 628-1533
Rio de Janeiro, RJ — (contact ISKCON Teresopolis)
Salvador, BA — R. Alvaro Adorno, 17, Brotas, 40225 460/ Tel. +55 (071) 382-1064/ E-mail: iskconba@atarde.com.br
São Carlos, SP — R. Emilio Ribas, 195, Centro, CEP 13563 060
São Paulo, SP — Av. Angelica, 2583, Santa Cecilia, CEP 01227 200/ Tel. +55 (011) 259-7352/ E-mail: iskconsp@zipmail.com.br

RURAL COMMUNITIES

● **Parati, RJ (Fazenda Goura Vrindavana)** — CP 62, Serto Idaiatuba, CEP 23970 020/ E-mail: ramadhanuh@hotmail.com
Pindamonhangaba, SP (Fazenda Nova Gokula) — CP 108, Bairro Ribeiro Grande, CEP 12400 000/ Tel. +55 (012) 982-9036/ Fax: +55 (012) 982-9036/ E-mail: faznovgk@iconet.com.br
Teresopolis, RJ (Vrajabhumi Dhama) — CP 92430, Varzea, CEP 25951 970/ Tel. +55(021) 262-8208/ E-mail: rasananda.swami@bbt.se

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

Caxias do Sul, RS — R. Itália Travi, 601, Rio Branco CEP 95097 710

MEXICO

◆ **Guadalajara** — Pedro Moreno No. 1791, Sector Juarez, Jalisco/ Tel. +52 (3) 616-0775
Mexico City — Tiburcio Montiel 45, Colonia San Miguel, Chapultepec D.F., 11850/ Tel. & fax: +52 (5) 271-1953/ E-mail: mexico@bbt.se
Monterrey — Av. Luis Elizondo No. 400, local 12, Col. Alta Vista/ Tel. +52 (8) 387-3028
Saltillo — Blvd. Saltillo No. 520, Col. Buenos Aires/ Tel. +52 (84) 178752
Tulancingo — (mail:) Apartado 252, Hildago/ Tel. +52 (775) 34072/ E-mail: libbhkti@mail.internet.com.mx

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Guadalajara — Contact ISKCON Guadalajara
Veracruz — Mail: Jesus Garcia 33, Col. Ferrocarril, Cerro Azul/ E-mail: libbhkti@mail.internet.com.mx

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

Veracruz — Restaurante Radhe, Sur 5 No. 50, Orizaba, Ver./ Tel. +52 (272) 57525

PERU

Lima — Carretera Central Km. 32 (frente a la curva que baja a la Cantuta) Chosica/ Tel. & fax: +51 (014) 491-0250
◆ **Lima** — Schell 634 Miraflores/ Tel. +51 (014) 444-2871/ E-mail: limandir@inictel.gob.pe
◆ **Lima** — Av. Garcilaso de la Vega 1670/ Tel. +51 (014) 433-2589

RURAL COMMUNITY

Correo De Bella Vista — DPTO De San Martin

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT

Cuzco — Espaderos 128

OTHER COUNTRIES

Asunción, Paraguay — Centro Bhaktivedanta, Mariano R. Alonso 925/ Tel. +595 (021) 480-266/ Fax: +595 (021) 490-449/ E-mail: johgilba@infonet.com.py
Bogotá, Colombia — Calle 46 BIS, 3-27, Chapinero Alto/ Tel. & fax +57 (01) 288-4680/ Tel. +57 (01) 288-6692/ E-mail: dharma-pdb@bbs.navegante.com.co
Buenos Aires, Argentina — Centro Bhaktivedanta, Andonaegui 2054 (1431)/ Tel. +54 (01) 523-4232/ Fax: +54 (01) 523-8085/ E-mail: iskcon-ba@gopalnet.com
Cali, Colombia — Avenida 2 EN, #24N-39/ Tel. +57 (023) 68-88-53
Caracas, Venezuela — Avenida Berlin, Quinta Tia Lola, La California Norte/ Tel. +58 (02) 225463
Chinandega, Nicaragua — Edificio Hare Krsna No. 108, Del Banco Nacional 10 mts. abajo/ Tel. +505 (341) 2359
Essequibo Coast, Guyana — New Navadvipa Dham, Mainstay
Georgetown, Guyana — 24 Uitvlugt Front, West Coast Demerara
Guatemala, Guatemala — Calzada Roosevelt 4-47 tercer nivel, Zona 11
Guayaquil, Ecuador — 6 de Marzo 226 or V. M. Rendon/ Tel. +593 (04) 308412 or 309420/ E-mail: gurumanl@ecua.net.ec
Montevideo, Uruguay — Centro de Bhakti-Yoga, Mariano Moreno 2660/ Tel. +598 (02) 477919/ E-mail: bircandr@chasque.apc.org
Panama, Republic of Panama — Via las Cumbres, entrada Villa Zaita, casa #10, frente a INPSA, (mail: P.O. Box 6-1776, El Dorado)/ Tel. +507 231-6561/ E-mail: iskconpanama@hotmail.com
Pereira, Colombia — Carrera 5a, No.19-36
Rosario, Argentina — Centro de Bhakti-Yoga, Paraguay 556 (2000)/ Tel. +54 (041) 252630 or 264243/ Fax: +54 (041) 490838/ E-mail: rosario@dasa.satlink.net
◆★ **San José, Costa Rica** — Centro Cultural Govinda, Avenida 2 #932, de la Caja del Seguro Social 125 metros al este (mail: Apartado 166, 1002, Paseo de los Estudiantes)/ Tel. +506 256-7392 or -9645/ E-mail: caitanya@sol.rasca.co.cr
San José, Costa Rica — Avenida 6, de la Pizza Hut 50 metros al oeste, Heredia (mail: Apartado 166, 1002, Paseo de los Estudiantes)/ Tel. +506 227-4505/ Fax: +506 226-0685/ E-mail: arjunadasa@hotmail.com
San Salvador, El Salvador — Cuidad Merliot (mail: Apartado Postal 1506)/ Tel. +503 78-0799
Santiago, Chile — Carrera 330/ Tel. +56 (02) 698-8044/ E-mail: 16108hk@entel.net
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic — Calle San Francisco de Asis No. 73, Ensanche Ozama/ E-mail: svats1949@aol.com
Tegucipalpa, Honduras — (mail: Apartado Postal 30305)/ Tel. +504 32-3172/ Fax. +504 34-7806
Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies — Orion Drive, Debe/ Tel. +1 (809) 647-3165
Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies — Prabhupada Ave., Longdenville, Chaguanas/ E-mail: agni.sdg@bbt.se

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Argentina (Bhaktilata Puri) — Ciudad de la Paz 3554 (1429) Capital Federal/ Tel. & fax: +54 (01) 523-8085
Colombia (Nueva Mathura) — Cruzero del Guali, Municipio de Caloto, Valle del Cauca/ Tel. 612688 en Cali
Costa Rica (Nueva Goloka Vrindavana) — Carretera Cartago-Paraiso, de la iglesia cristiana Rios de Agua Viva, 75 metros al oeste y 300 metros al sudeste, Cartago (mail: Apartado 166, 1002, Paseo de los Estudiantes)/ Tel. +506 551-6752 or 227-4505/ Fax: +506 552-3838 or 226-0685/ E-mail: caitanya@sol.rasca.co.cr
Ecuador (Nueva Mayapur) — Ayampe (near Guayaquil)/ E-mail: nrsmha@cue.satnet.net
El Salvador — Carretera a Santa Ana, Km. 34, Canton Los Indios, Zapotitan, Dpto. de La Libertad
Guyana — Seawell Village, Corentyne, East Berbice

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

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Room for More Chanters

ACCORDING TO PEOPLE who estimate such things, last October saw the arrival on earth of human being number six billion. Many people wish that he or she had never made it. They complain that the planet's already too crowded and every new birth just adds to the problem.

As I look out my window at the cows grazing in a spacious pasture nearby, crowding and overpopulation are far from my mind. Whenever I fly, I'm always amazed at how much land lies unpopulated and uncultivated. From the sky, at least, there seems to be plenty of room for more people. The earth shouldn't have any problem handling its six billionth passenger, or even any of his or her brothers and sisters who may follow.

My impression squares with research, which shows that the earth can support many times the current population—if those of us already here manage resources properly. At least three changes would help assure the prosperity of growing populations: honest management and distribution of the earth's bounty, the return to a simpler, more natural way of life (including vegetarianism), and the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

What does chanting have to do with feeding the world? Chanting God's names pleases Him, and He responds by sending rain, without which the crops won't grow. We can live simply and manage wisely, but unless the rains come, fertile fields become deserts.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that He'll send rain if we'll send Him a token of our appreciation. He wants us to perform sacrifice, to offer Him a sample of the gifts He sends. In former times, people executed sacrifices daily in their homes and temples, and kings diligently sponsored elaborate sacrifices attended by thousands of people. Stadiums were built for these affairs, and the resources of the kingdom were pooled. The citizens didn't complain about government spending for these events; they knew that the sacrifices brought prosperity.

People today scoff at the idea that sacrifices bring rain. But are traditional sacrifices really that much different from the bill-paying rituals we perform each month? We sit at our sacrificial altar (desk), pull out our sacrificial paraphernalia (pen and checkbook), perform some hand motions (write the check), take a ritual walk (to the mailbox), and so on. By this sacrifice, the water keeps running. Similarly, by Vedic sacrifice, the rains come. We're paying our cosmic bill.

The Vedic scriptures tell us that in the current age we don't have to perform elaborate sacrifices; we can simply take part in the sublime sacrifice known as *saṅkīrtana*—the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

Showing our gratitude to Kṛṣṇa by sacrifice is essential, but it's just the beginning of reconciling with Him. Kṛṣṇa wants more than official tax-paying. He wants our love, and chanting His names can awaken that love. We should chant not only to repay our debts to Him but to love Him as well.

—Nāgarāja Dāsa

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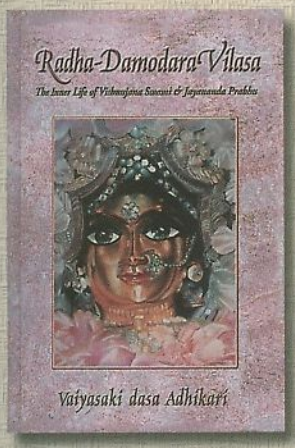

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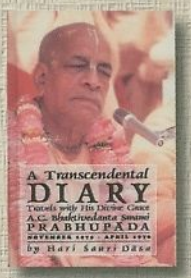

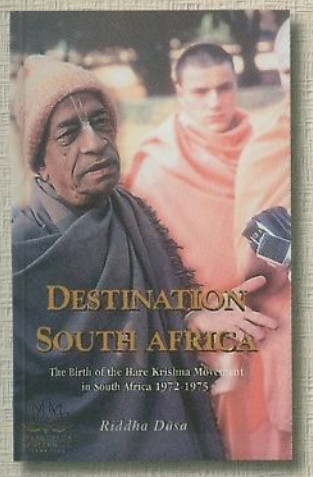

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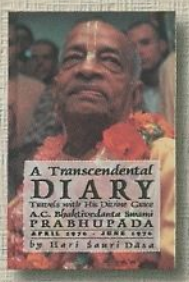

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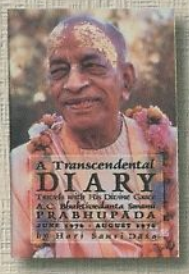

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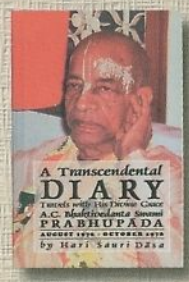

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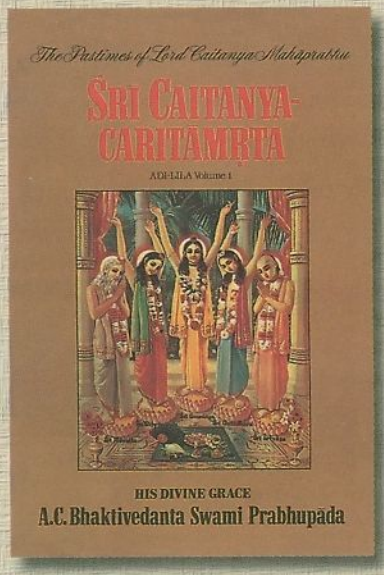

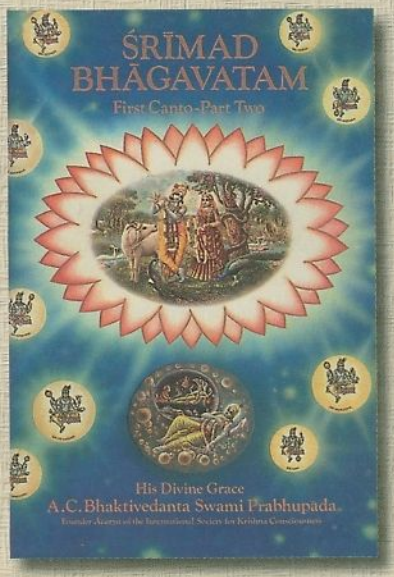

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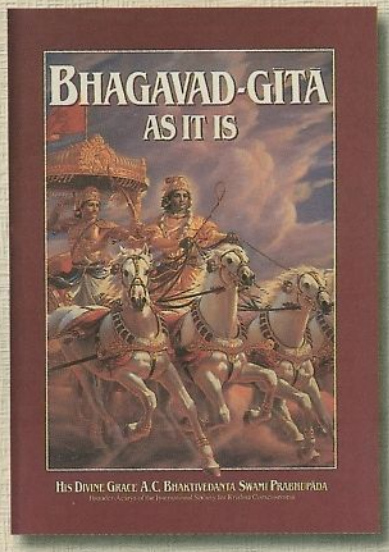

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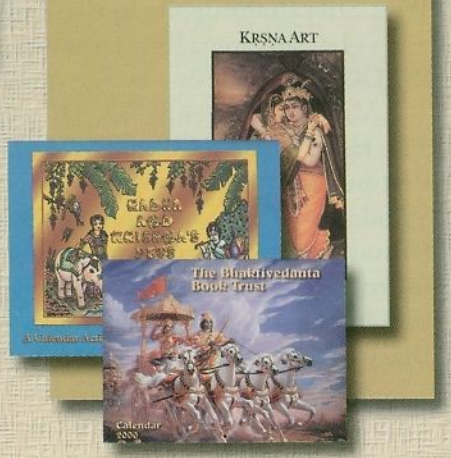

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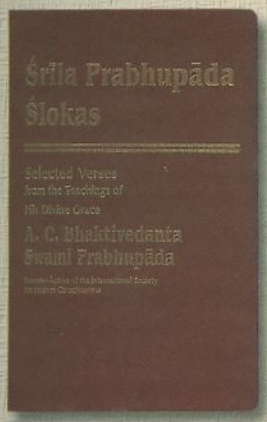

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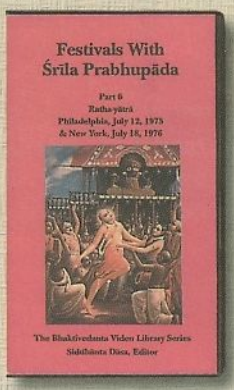

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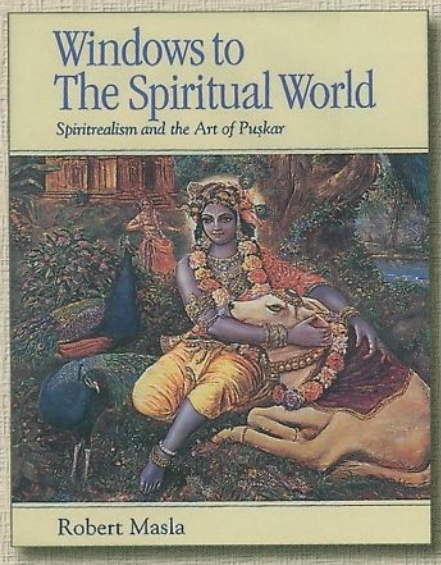

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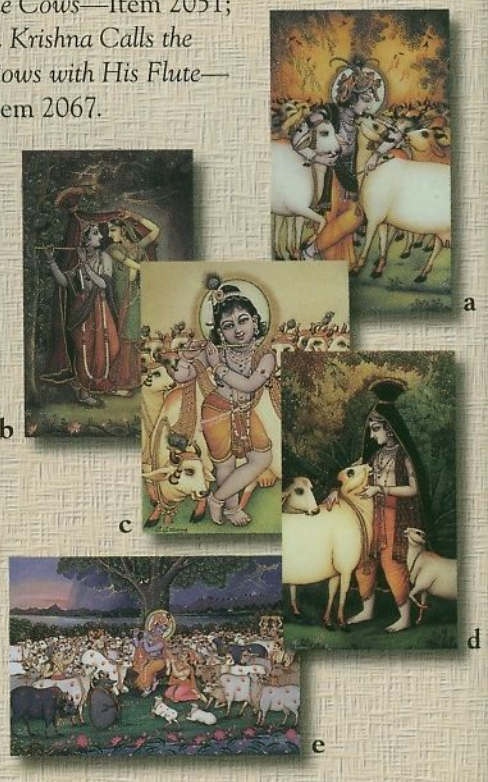

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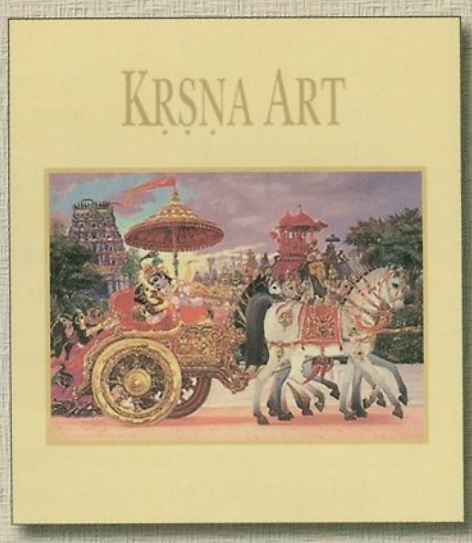

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One who identifies his self
as the inert body composed of mucus,
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wife and family are permanently his own,
who thinks an earthen image
or the land of his birth is worshipable,
or sees a place of pilgrimage
as merely the water there, but who never
identifies with, feels kinship with,
worships, or even visits those who are wise
in spiritual truth—such a person
is no better than a cow or an ass.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.84.13

◆

By uttering the single name
of Kṛṣṇa just once, one attains
the same benefit as that gained
by reciting Lord Viṣṇu's
thousand names three times.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa

◆

By worshiping the devotees of the Lord
all one's desires will be fulfilled.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (3.1.10)

◆

He is a miserly man who does not solve
the problems of life as a human being
and who thus quits this world
like the cats and dogs, without understanding
the science of self-realization.

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3.8.10)

When the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa dance,
their steps crush the inauspiciousness
of the earth, their glances destroy
the inauspiciousness of the ten directions,
and their raised arms push away the
inauspiciousness in the demigods' planets.

Padma Purāṇa and
Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya (20.68)

◆

One who performs worship
of Lord Kṛṣṇa but fails to worship
His devotees should be understood
to be not a devotee of the Lord
but simply a victim of false pride.

Lord Śiva
Padma Purāṇa

◆

Anyone who prays to Me and takes shelter
from Me becomes My ward, and I protect
him always from all sorts of calamities.

Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva
(Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation)
Nṛsiṁha Purāṇa

◆

One cannot challenge the authority
of the Supreme and know Him
at the same time. He reserves the right
of not being exposed to such
a challenging spirit of an insignificant spark
of the whole, a spark subjected
to the control of the illusory energy.

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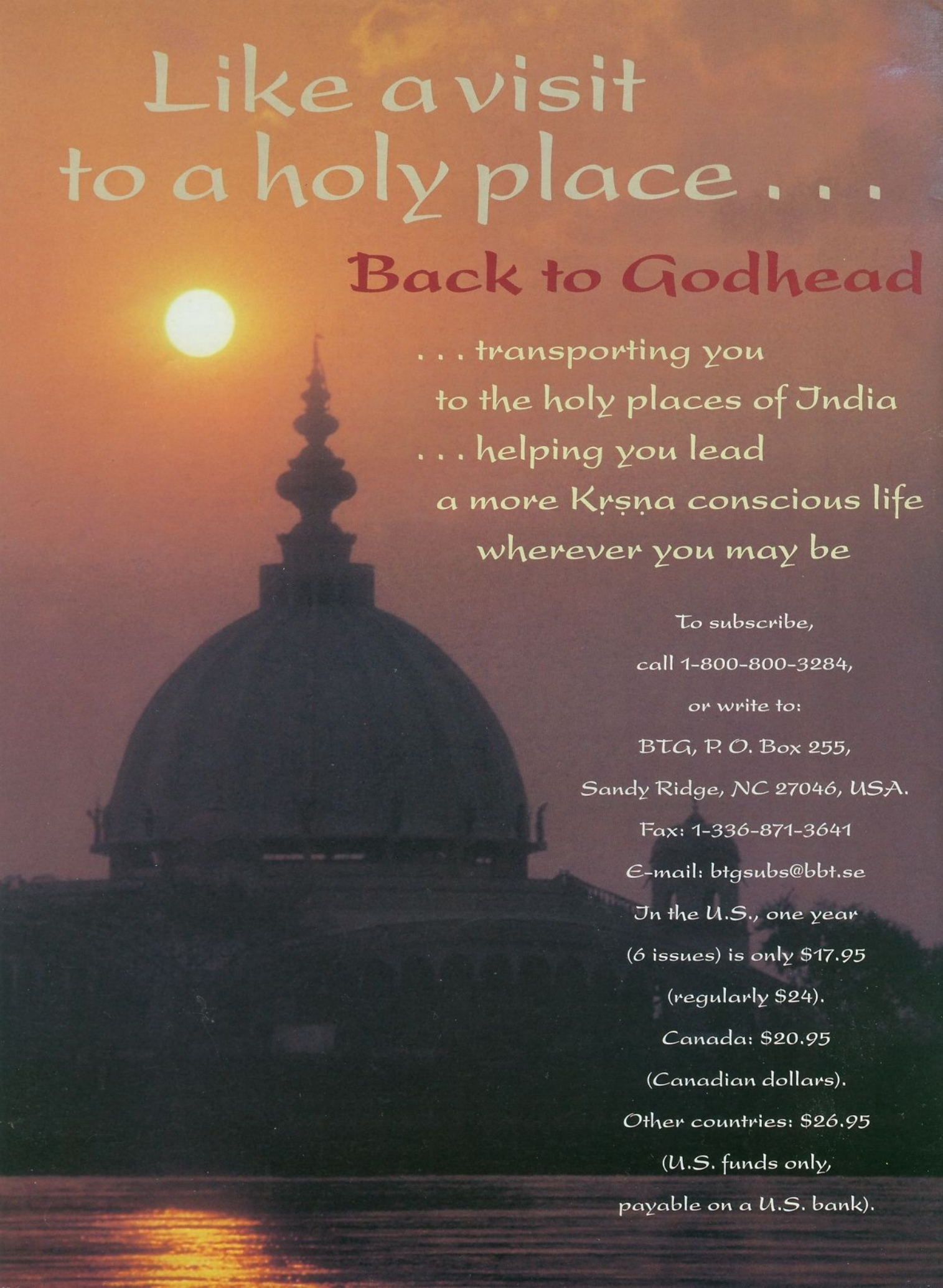
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